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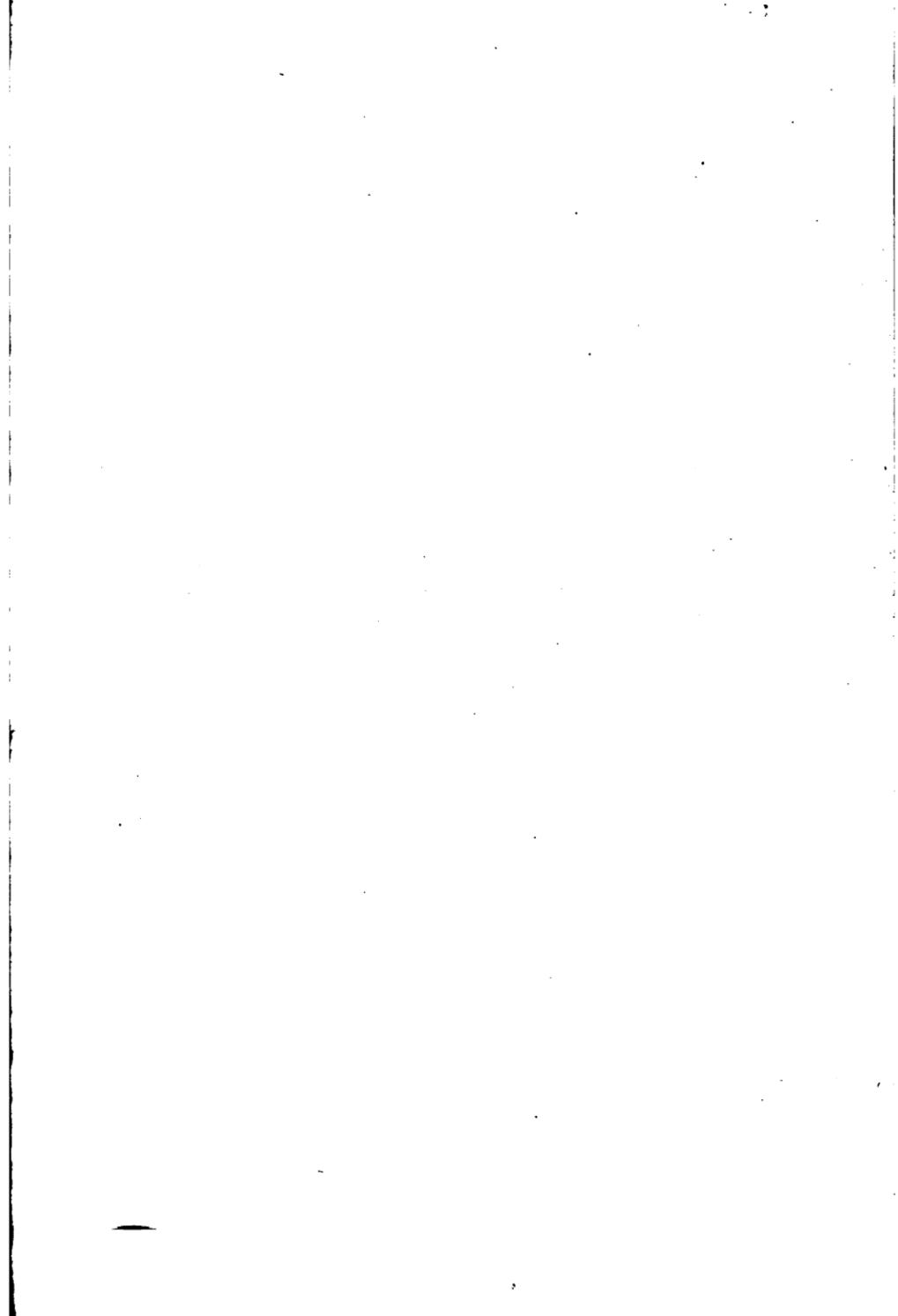
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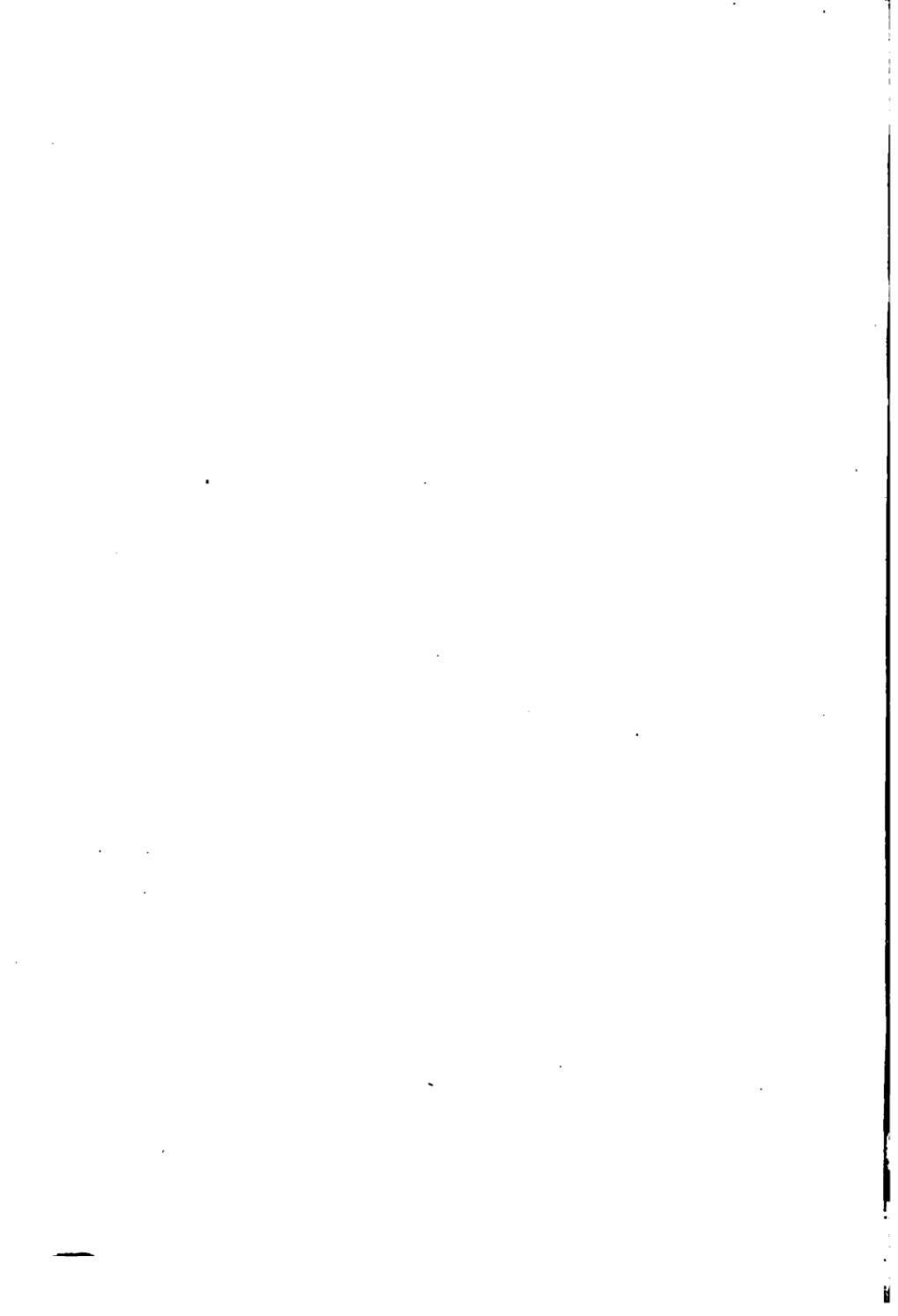
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SHADOWY THRESHOLDS



SHADOWY THRESHOLDS

BY

CALE YOUNG RICE

AUTHOR OF "WRAITHS AND REALITIES,"
"COLLECTED PLAYS AND POEMS," ETC.

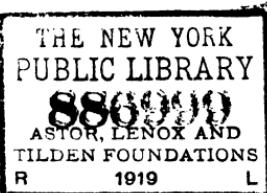


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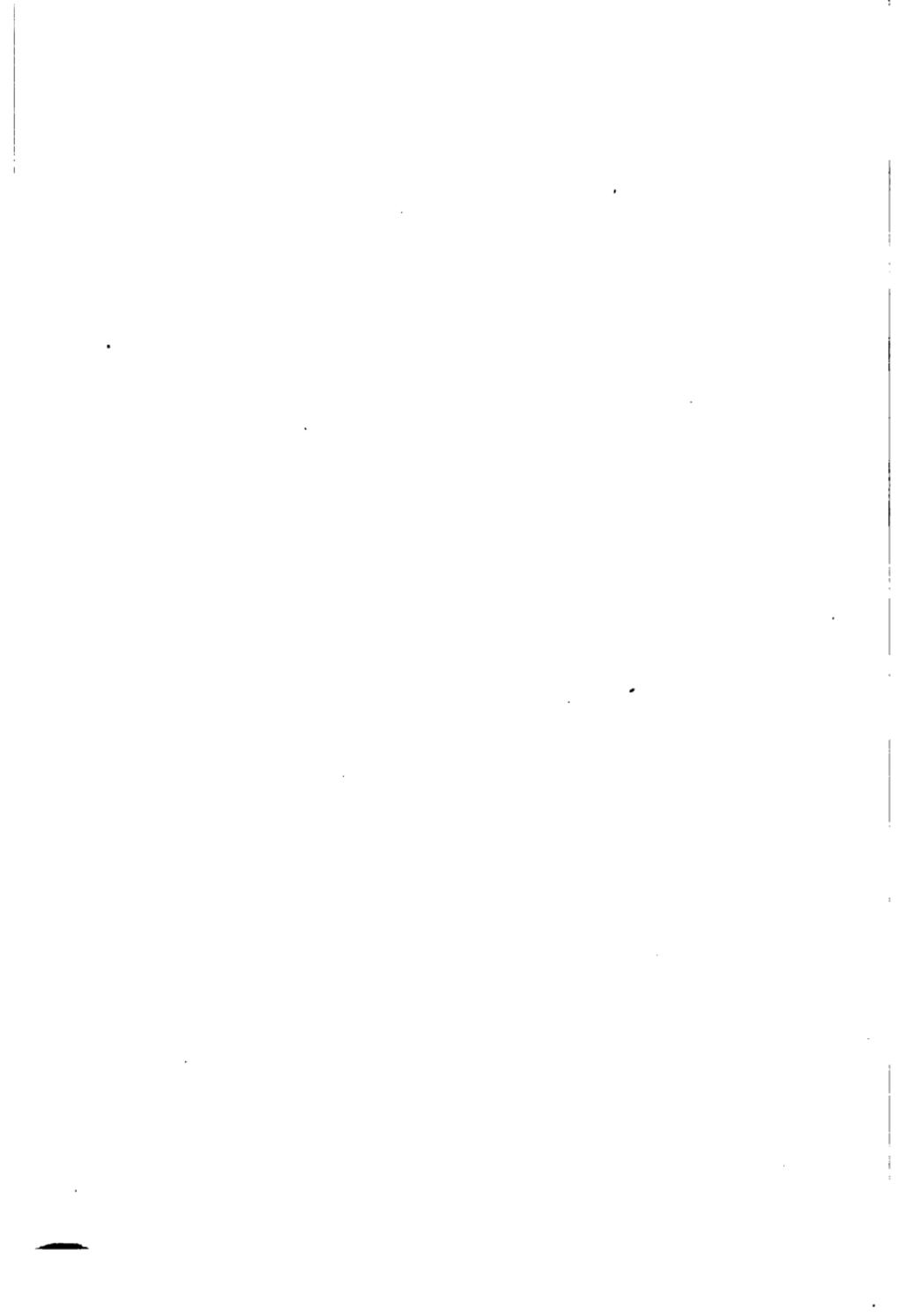
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W. W. DODGE
CHILDREN
MATERIAL

TO
JANE GILMORE KNOTT
AND TO THE MEMORY OF
RICHARD W. KNOTT
FRIENDS ENDEARED BY MANY HAPPY
HOURS OF MUTUAL INTERESTS
AND INTIMACIES

X. 30 Oct. 11.



PREFACE¹

I

Though America's poetry criticism just now promises well, in spite of some incredibly deluded judgments, a constant protest arises against the "personal" nature of a portion of it. This portion largely emanates from certain poet-critics or poetry centres and proceeds under logical defenses which it should be interesting to examine. They are mainly two: One that "no permanent standards of judging poetry exist," and the other that "no satisfactory definition of what poetry is can be agreed upon."

The first of these assertions is in high favor

¹ This preface originally appeared in the *New York Times* Review of Books, in February, 1919. Two poems in this volume, also, appeared in a former volume which will not be republished.

with the "ultra-moderns"—whose extremism in poetry makes as dull reading as academicism itself. As dull, that is, to those "moderns" who hold that art freedom and finality no more spring from excesses than from conservatism. Who believe, on the contrary, that only a selective liberalism offers both the repose and unrest necessary to permanently interesting creativeness.

In calling attention to this, as I do, and to the fact that the creed of "no standards" seems self-destructive, I am not to be construed as opposing free verse movements. Such verse I have ever used — though not the unimpassioned, unimaginative, insufficiently rhythmical prose kinds, and not with the belief that it is a substitute for inspiration. Neither it, however, nor any quality of poetry old or new has any necessary bearing upon the assertion that "judging poetry is nine-tenths a matter of preference, not of applying standards." That assertion being merely a denial of all authoritativeness in criticism, inevitably destroys any

worth in its own practice — except such as comes from the mere pleasure of expressed opinions.

This would be admitted, but there is more. The tone of the "no standards" criticism rarely indicates that its adherents really believe themselves incapable of giving the reader permanent guidance or of exacting faith from him. On the contrary, an intolerant confidence in its rightness makes it impatient of all "preference" save its own. Practicers of it, therefore, are not only given an opportunity for expressing their personal equation, but find in it a shelter for much "preference" arising in friendship, enmity, or ambitious desire to boost the particular kind of verse they themselves write.

Further examination of the assertion cannot be attempted here, but this much concerning its origin can be said. Preference is fundamental in all judgment, as faith — according to Mr. Balfour's famous argument — is the foundation of all belief. Most people, for example, prefer the beau-

tiful to the ugly, the true to the false, the noble to the base. But since times come when conventional imitations of the beautiful cause revolt to the ugly; when banality brings craving for the new, though it be false; or when the uninspiredly noble leads to choice of the decadent — the cry easily rises that no standards of judging poetry really exist.

These revolts are not surprising, and are often of value. What is surprising is that so many fail to see that the measure of our artistic sincerity and intelligence is not determined by revolt alone, but by the things to which we revolt — and by what we are willing to destroy. Art may depend on exasperation rather than inspiration to break its bonds, but exasperation is not inspiration. Only those extremists who take it to be so will ask us to believe that any prose dullness or absurdity articulated into lines and strung un lyrically before us makes something wholly important in poetry — something no permanent standards can judge.

The second assertion that poetry cannot be sat-

isfactorily defined is not confined to the ultra-modernists, though frequently used by them and other coterie critics in defending everything they choose to call poetry. Our inability, however, to arrive at a definition of poetry that will be as satisfactory as any other definition in this relative world seems due to several confusions.

The first of these is that some of us, instead of seeking to make our definition a scientific delimitation, make it a panegyric. When Keats calls sweet peas beautiful flowers "on tiptoe for a flight," he is not defining sweet peas, but magically praising them. So the recent prize poem defining poetry "a magic light that springs from the deep soul of things" is likewise praise — charming but not definitive.

Again, some demand that a definition shall be a touchstone enabling us to tell unfailingly what lines are poetry. This is like asking that a definition of gold should contain the name of the acid that detects its pureness.

Yet others, forgetting that all things are conditional, and that each must be defined in the undefined terms of others, ask for an absolute definition. Only a satisfactory working definition is required.

Finally, many do not realize that the main object of our definition is to distinguish poetry from prose, on the one hand, and from mere verse on the other. Or, if they do, they assert that, since all people through all time do not agree as to just what things are poetry, no satisfactory definition is possible. Yet experts should be able to define poetry as satisfactorily as other experts define stones or stars — provided they only seek a definition which is a descriptive delimitation of that art from any other with which it may be confused.

If these conclusions are right there is no reason why poetry experts should not as unanimously accept a working definition of poetry as experts in other fields accept other definitions. I offer there-

fore this analysis of poetry and a consequent definition:

Poetry on its formal side is an art of rhythm, metrical or unmetrical. This rhythm must differ from prose rhythm by being more lyrically or measuredly organized. So much is shown by its division into line-lengths, and by the fact that some prose has so many of poetry's other qualities that mere division into line-lengths will suffice to give it the additional lyric value which enables us to say it is poetry. This, however, is not the case with much so-called "polyphonic prose" which is merely camouflaged by rhymes, color-adjectives, and occasional metrical rhythms into a resemblance of poetry; as other prose is camouflaged into seeming poetry by being shredded into free verse.

On the other hand, and from the side of substance, there are many qualities — of imagination, passion, charm, etc.— which make poetry when they are embodied in a sufficiently musical rhythm. The degree of originality, felicity, or intensity of

these qualities, and of their rhythm, determines the worth of the poetry. For unless any lines in question possess some of these qualities in a measure so rare as to appeal to the real poetry experts of the generations, they must drop into the class of mere verse.

Nor does this principle fail if the supposed poetry experts of any generation fail to estimate a Shakespeare — as has happened; or if any prominent one or number of them prefer a Pope, as did Byron, to a Wordsworth, Shelley, or Keats. The critics of any generation may be right in their estimate of a poem, but only the continued survival of its lines for the experts of other generations suffices to give them final standing.

A definition of poetry, then, which will describe and delimit it from prose, on the one hand, and from mere verse, on the other, must take all this into consideration. It must, in addition, for brevity's sake, find a common term which will be inclusive of the many different qualities poetry may

possess. Such a definition — though doubtless a better can be framed — I here offer as adequate.

Poetry is the expression of our experience in emotional word-rhythms more lyrically measured or organized than those of prose, and having some permanency of appeal not possessed by mere verse.

Whether this definition be accepted or not, one thing is clear. We must get rid of the "twilight zone" around poetry in which irresponsible criticism can ambush mere likes and dislikes. This can be done by the common-sense recognition that judging poetry is not "nine-tenths a matter of preference." For although poets may transcend, or critics repeal, the laws of criticism of their predecessors, they can never abrogate the fundamental permanent standards of judging true poetic literature. Rareness of rhythm — just now stressed as if it were the whole of inspiration — and of passion, imagination, etc., are immemorial standards of judging, and to them all critics must, and invariably do, appeal.

II

Another source of the critical confusion of both today and yesterday has been due, it seems to me, to the failure of critics to comprehend the fundamental relationships of realism, classicism, and romanticism — and the subvarieties of each. For that impressionism, symbolism, mysticism, idealism, transcendentalism, futurism, imagism, etc., are but varieties of these three fundamental divisions of poetry, or of other literature, can easily be shown.

An investigation of literary history would reveal, I fancy, that revolts against realism tend to pass through classicism to romanticism — and the circle is completed by the revolt from romanticism back to realism. This latter is a phenomenon we have recently been experiencing in the reaction against "Victorianism" — which is regarded as decaying romanticism.

A revolt from romanticism — or classicism — to realism is usually thought of as "a return to na-

ture," or to "the things of everyday life." This return, however, if put psychologically, means essentially a return to a literature of the senses. For realism is most largely concerned with the senses and sense-observation of life.

A revolt from realism to classicism means that the sensuous has become dull and unsatisfying, and that poets and public want more of the literature of the mind and soul.

A revolt from classicism to romanticism can likewise only mean that writers are no longer finding the things of the mind and soul sufficiently stimulating to the poetic faculty. Therefore they reach out into the marvels, mysteries, and wonders that surround life — even into the supernatural or cosmically unknown.

If realism is thus the literature of the senses, it is easy to see that impressionism, futurism, and imagism are but minor forms of it. Impressionism is the literature of sense impressions that are evanescent or atmospheric. Imagism is but static

impressionism stripped of atmosphere and subjectivity. Futurism but a clamor for sense impressions that are " primitive " or brutally real.

In like manner transcendentalism and idealism are but sublimated forms of classicism; and the kinship of symbolism and mysticism to romanticism becomes manifest. Symbolists either wish to express life mysteriously—" in a way that cannot be analyzed " the French Symbolists put it; or to express the mysteries of life under certain forms or symbols that will give them a suggestive concreteness. Mystics, on the other hand, are but romantics who mount out of sense, mind, and soul to some transcendent unity with the universe or God.

That this analysis is correct must, I believe, be admitted. With its critical recognition we should be better able to comprehend the need or value of changing from any one of these " isms " to another and the defects literary minds are likely to fall into in making the change. Mere rebels, for example, would not so easily be able to shout or

cackle as if by merely rebelling they had laid the egg from which all future criticism and creation must proceed. Rebels with a real variant of any "ism" could get a hearing without going through the confused process of overestimation and consequent underestimation at the hands of the academics. Finally, we should recognize that all "newnesses" in poetry are but variants of these three fundamental forms, and so be able more quickly to place them.

III

For a basis from which to make comparisons of poets one word more may, perhaps, be added here. Every poet who is called by any considerable number of reviewers a foremost, or *the* foremost, poet of his country is naturally a mark for criticism by those poet-critics who aspire to his place. Or if criticism fails, to a boycott of silence — on the theory that an enemy who has achieved should not be advertised. And especially is this the case if such a

poet be an advocate of the full freedom of poetry as against the narrow autocracy of any "ism" which the aspirants happen to be riding.

As this kind of criticism is manifestly worthless, if not discreditable, I will venture to suggest an analytical comparative test that has served to restrain my own judgments, and that is at least universal of application.

I have believed that poetry without fundamental vitality is bloodless; without passion, fleshless; without spirit, nerveless; and without thought, spineless. I have believed that without direct natural speech it is cramped or crippled; without true musical rhythm, destitute of grace; without imagination, shorn of beauty; and without charm, of that lure which springs, perhaps, from a blending of some of these qualities — or of all.

Great poetry, therefore, it is evident, must possess many of these attributes, and the greatest at times seems to combine all. Which of them, on the other hand, any particular "ism" lacks, may easily

be determined by those who care to make the analysis.¹

¹ The formula quoted in this discussion that poetry criticism is "nine-tenths a matter of preference" comes from Mr. Louis Untermeyer, whose critics have amply pointed out the uses to which he puts it. Mr. Untermeyer offers no definition of what poetry is—that might limit his "preferences" too much. But as he has espoused the Heine temperament, revolutionary socialism, the theory of Synge that poetry must become "brutal," and a belief that Whitman is the only poet whom the poet of the future should imitate, it is not difficult to estimate the comparative value of his judgments, preferences, and exclusions in the field of the twentieth century's poetry. That he adulates, also, the kind of verse he seeks to write, is of course intelligible.

It may be, as has been said, that Mr. Untermeyer is merely incapable of conceiving finality in poetry. Or, perhaps, as has been averred, it is the congenital poison of self-interest, partizanships and malice which vitiates his "preferences." In any case it has become evident to many that these preferences are as raw as the raw material which he usually judges to be permanent poetry, and that his judgments are rarely trustworthy, even in the sphere of his obsession, except when they follow the opinions of others.

In making these strictures, however, I must tell the reader that Mr. Untermeyer is acridly opposed to any praise given work I have done. To retaliate in kind on his own verse would, of course, be the usual thing to do. But the present-day practice certain poets have of reviewing the books of their friends or enemies seems to me more than questionable.

How far any such poet-reviewer is sincere, or how far he becomes, by omissions or commissions, that most con-

temptible of literary parasites, a petty thief of poetic reputations, is impossible to determine. But as there is no law compelling a critic to give credit to good work, nor any to prevent malicious attacks on it, the temptation is manifest. Consequently the spirit of telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, of both friend and foe, is rare with these poet-critics. And that of course is the basis of any criticism worthy the name.

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SHADOWY THRESHOLDS



A POET'S CHILDHOOD

I

FIRST STEPS

A country village, night . . .
A child stealing from home
Along a lone plank sidewalk,
Where stars and the eyes of cattle
Stared thro the darkness at him;
And where the whisper of trees
Was conscience — till he had reached
His father's store, and fallen
Sobbing, tho triumphant,
Into his father's arms.

II

THE UNSEEN

What was the meaning of it,
“ Total eclipse of the sun.”

Whispered about with terror?
A shadow fell on the apples
That scented the noonday orchard.
And the child, too, was lifted
To gaze thro a smoked glass at it.
And tho he only saw
The glass — not the moon's ghost
Haunting the sun's vastness —
Awes invisible swept him.

III

BIRTH

He swung, on the porch, in the rain,
At his grandmother's, near.
They had sent him there; for the doctor
Had said he would bring him a sister
From a secret hollow stump
Somewhere in the owl-kept woods.
They came for him, and showed him
A little red sightless thing
So new to the world that he fled —

Being too near, himself,
To the Nescience whence it came.

IV
FIRE

With stolen matches they did it,
He and his elder brother
And the boy in the house beyond them.
The hayloft door was open,
And climbing they kindled the hay,
For the peril of seeing it burn —
Kindled and beat it out
Each time . . . till sudden the air
Was a frenzy of flame about them.
How many a time since then
Has he played with the peril of fire!

V
TRAVEL

He went at last on a journey
With one of his father's drivers —
Miles and miles, high-seated

A POET'S CHILDHOOD

On a hogshead of tobacco.
All day the waggon bore them
By fields and boggy bottoms
To the market — the end of the world.
And the next day, returning,
Thro saddened woods at twilight,
He heard the whippoorwill,
And knew the first lone longing
For things never to be.

VI

WOMAN

A travelling photographer,
Tenting, came to the village,
And with him, glad and golden,
His little daughter of four.
The boy, swept by a charm
As old as the garden of Eden,
Forgot the promised boon
Of the camera's image of him
For his image fondly shaped,

And henceforth to be sought,
In the shining eye of an Eve.

VII

CRIME

Election day — August,
The town thronged with the country,
And first-pluckt watermelons
Ripe to the heart with redness.
Money to spend — and so
A saloon door flung open,
A rind flicked at a passer,
A curse, a blade flashing,
Then blood, the stain of the ages,
On stones that seemed to the boy
The altar of murdered Abel.

VIII

THE GRAVE

From a negro hut, glowing
With supper fire at twilight,
A mournful melody floated

To the boy, " I may be gone!
I too, O Lord, tomorrow,
In cold earth may be lying,
Down in a lonesome graveyard . . .
O Lord . . . how long!"
The first sad witchery was it
Of death to the boy . . . " How long! "

IX

CHURCH

He had only heard its bell,
A far sweet quaver, calling
Across the night or the morning;
Or seen its shuttered whiteness,
With legs of brick to stand on,
And bonneted with a cupola —
Like the spinster of his dread.
They took him — and he heard . . .
And, years thereafter, hearkened . . .
But now he only worships
Outside it, like the bell.

X
SCHOOL

“Two times two are four” . . .
Did the grass and trees know figures?
“Three times four are twelve” . . .
Had the brook to count its ripples?
He did not know: and yet
So wise to him were the words
It murmured, that all books
For many a Spring thereafter
Seemed but as prisons to punish
Eyes made for the hills and heavens.

XI
GLORY

A sorghum mill, grinding . . .
To the back of the horse that turned it
The boy lifted, exultant —
A dream come true at last.
Grinding, grinding, grinding . . .

Till he tired of the height's loneliness,
Of glory — that is only
The going around in a circle
Above the talk and the laughter.
Tired . . . and yet thro the years
Has mounted his dream, to grind.

XII

TRANSPLANTED

He was to move to the city!
The garden fruits were gathered
And sold; house things uprooted.
The stage-coach, made of mud
And creaks, took the boy in it —
He little knew how far!
The train, a marvellous terror,
Swept the woods backward from it.
The boat, on the flood of the River,
Paused — and the boy walked forth
From its ark to an earth of strangeness.

XIII
NOSTALGIA

Houses, houses, houses:
And one, lonely among them,
His father's, reached in the twilight.
The boy wanted a barn
And cows tinkling the meadow;
But instead came clamor of firebells
And of fire engines shrieking . . .
Then a new hungering knowledge
Of things irrevocable,
Whose name is Nevermore.

XIV
CASTE

He sat on his gate gazing . . .
And the church steeple opposite
Was the highest thing in the world.
But the Sunday-arrayed children,
Who passed in snowy linen,

With ties and sashes flowing,
Laughed at his rustic dress.
He sat . . . and the curse of caste
That has shrivelled all church steeples
Shrunk his too — and sullied
All high wonder in him.

XV

POETRY

A rainy day and the room
Of the Public School crowded.
Faces strange and alien
From lands of the Pole and Teuton.
A teacher pale and fragile.
The name of the "great" Longfellow.
Then words, "The vine still clings
To the mouldering wall." Sadness:
And the poet in him aching
For the first time to be born.

XVI

CHILD-LOVE

At the corner she lived, the girl
Who had taken his part when laughter
At the village clothes he wore
Was tossed at him by the others.
Beautiful, lithe and free
She was, brave and ready
To follow him into perils.
And he gave her his heart — nor knows
Today if the love of a child,
A youth, or a man, is divinest.

XVII

TRAGEDY

Summer days — and the day
For a picnic into the woods.
The tinkling mule-car took them,
The girl, joy-bright, beside him.
And all day he was her hero,

While daringly she followed —
Leaping, as they returned,
Once and again from the car,
Leaping — at last to fall
Beneath blind wheels — that taught him
How little love is to death.

XVIII

THE BROKEN HEART

They took her away in the hearse,
While he stood by, forgotten —
Yet never more to forget.

The water-plug on the corner,
That once was a seat of dreams,
Where he had waited for her,
Was left unclaimed to the others.

For now he had found the way
To the immemorial pools
Of healing — the heart's pools
Of Silence and Solitude.

XIX

GOD

He ran far in the moonlight,
Alone, gladly alone,
Playing at "Hare and Hounds";
And, after the hounds were baffled,
Turned, moon-quited, home.
He sank on the grass and his gaze
Floated far up the steeple,
Up, then endlessly on —
Till sudden it touched Infinity,
Unfathomable — and God.

FINITUDE

I

One ruby, amid a diamond spray of stars,
The coast light flashes;
The tide plashes.

Across a mile of bay-sweet land the moon
Comes soon:
She has lost half of her lustre and looks old.

A cricket, finitude's incarnate cry,
And the infinite waters with their hushless sigh
Are the two sounds
The night has:
Each in eternal wistfulness abounds.

II

I have wakened out of my sleep because I too
Am wistful,
Tristeful;

Because I know that half of *me* is gone,
And that all frailty cries in the cricket's tone.

I have wakened out of my sleep to watch and listen.

For what?

To see for a moment universes glisten;
To wonder and want — and go to sleep again,
 And die,
And be forgot.

THE COLONEL'S STORY

No, no, my friend; there is an agony
Not to be exorcised out of the world
By any voice of hope.— But I will tell you.

The *Sonia* was sailing without lights—
Bearing three hundred souls— and without bells;
For she had reached the “Zone,” where the Hun
sharks
With their torpedo tongues could spit death at us
Out of the inky sea-hells where they hid.
On the main deck we stood, in a wind-shelter,—
My wife, and by us a pale girl whose eyes
Had all disaster in them. And my thought was,
“ I hope to God the moon is shut so deep
In cloud-murk there in the East that hurricanes

Can't blow her out of it." For in the Zone
The moon had come to mean only betrayal,
And now, if ever, was her wanton chance.

The slipping water soaked with soulless dark
Fell under and around us shudderingly,
Yet somehow brought an anxious hopefulness.
" We 're making twenty knots," I said; and felt
Our bow cut thro the tangle of the waves
As if the No Man's *Sea* ahead of us
Would soon be crossed; and I, out to rejoin
My regiment, could set my wife safe somewhere,
And help again to stab that curst Amphibian,
Autocracy — whose spawn in the sea gave it
A terror greater than infinitude's.
For God knows, with the woman that one loves
Aboard a ship, and only a cloud perhaps
Between the Hun's shark eyes and sure escape
From the black icy fathoms that would choke her,
There 's little left within a man but nerves.
So when I drew her closer into the shelter,

Out of the sheering wind, the life belt
She wore seemed like a coffin in that sepulchre
Of night and sea. And when the other, there,
With the disaster eyes and pallid face,
Turned it toward us, I was shaken as if
The moon had suddenly walked out of her shroud
With phosphorescent purpose to reveal us.

But on we plunged and tumbled, till at last
The blank monotonous sink and swell lulled me
To faith. And I was only thinking softly
Of her — my wife's — first kiss on a summer night
Under the moonlit laurels of our home,
When came a cry from that wan girl gazing
Frozenly on the sea — where the moon now
Indeed was pointing at us pallidly
A death-path. And my throat was gripped by it,
That clutching cry, as if the glacial depths
Down under us already had risen up.
So starting toward the slipping rail I called,
“ What is it? where? ” For, tense as a clairvoyant,

With eyes that seemed to feel under the tide
The stealthy peril stalking us, she stood there.

After a moment's gazing I too saw —
What she foresensed — destruction seething to us.
“The boats!” I cried, “the rafts!” And stum-
bled back

Over the streaming deck to her I loved.
Then the shock came, as if the sea's wild heart
Had broken under us, and ripped the entrails,
The human hundreds out of our vessel's hold,
To strew the foam with mania and despair,
With shrieks strangled by wind and wave and
terror.

And thro that floating, mangled, blind confusion,
Where hands reached at the infinite then sank,
Where faces clung to wreckage as to eternity,
I sought for her who shared my life's voyage,
Who had been my heart's helmswoman; and who
now,

Wrecked with me, swirled, too, in the torn waters . . .

And soon I saw her, still by that wan girl,
Tossed on a watery omnipotence.

Blind with brine I swam for her — as the moon,
Her treachery done, again got to a cloud.
Flung back by every wave, I fought; beating
Against them as against God. And soon, somehow,
Had reached to a limp body on the surge,
Limp and strange — but living . . . and not
drowned!

Then seeing a raft near, I struggled onward,
Gulping the sea and being gulped by it,
But finding arms at last that drew my burden
And me from horror to half-swooning safety.

I could have died, I think, of the relief.
But the moon came again, nakedly out,
As if to see what she had done. Then I,
Bending over the form that I had fought for,

And chafing it, saw . . . not her I loved!
Infinite Cruelty, not her I loved! . . .
But that pale girl, with the eyes of all disaster.

Oh, yes, I raved, and said God was a Hun,
A Kaiser of a Universe that loathed him.
And back, too, would have leapt, into the waves,
But the same hands that saved were ready to hold
me.

PEACE TRIUMPHANT!

(November, 1918)

Earth, Mother Earth, do you feel light flowing,
Peace-light, waited so vainly and long?
Feel the great blood-eclipse guiltily going,
Swept from your face by a tide too strong?
Over your rim is the bright flood rilling,
Singing thro air, and under the seas.
Never since birth was such a beam-spilling,
Never such warmth, such healing and ease!
Wildly it wraps you; and oh, your children
Open their heart-gates to the glad rays!
Blood-gloom there was, and blindness and hating,
Now there is wonder, relief and amaze.

Earth, Mother Earth, it will loose away from you,
Pestilence, famine, horror and pain.

Cleanse, and of loathed inhumanity calm you,
Giving your veins well-being again!
Sleep shall come back to your cities, chalets,
To ships in the night when the watch-bell sounds;
Sleep, the one opiate soothing Nature
Sleeplessly pours upon mortal wounds.
Sleep in the night and peace in the morning!
Under their cool, strong febrifuge,
Soon shall you swing again, thro clear ether,
Hopeful — tho the price paid be huge!

Swathingly, too, shall delight surge back to you!
For, like an incantation divine,
News that the Slaughter-Sway, so black to you,
Ceases, shall run to your heart like wine.
Visions shall steal to your breast, ecstatic:
Fathers again, by a fond home fire;
Lovers, in green lanes meeting to murmur
To the white stars their starry desire!
Visions of cities that rise, from ruin,
Proud to have given their life for a Gleam;

Lordlier rise, in glory and story,
Over the grave of War's last dream!

Yes, Mother Earth, you have suffered; but sorrow
Has brought you at last what *it* alone can.
Races you had, that raged; but tomorrow
Men on your sphere shall behold but man.
Nations you had,— all strifefully claiming
Food at your breast, and place in your arms,
Isles that bejewelled you, and broad empire
Over your lesser children-swarms.
Nations you had; but now to one nation
Fast they are merging — ready to say,
For the first time, there is but one mother
Of men — to be cherished by them alway!

THRESHOLDS

Each moment is a threshold, each day and hour and
year,

Of what has been, of what shall be, of what shall
disappear.

And thro' them slips the Universe, with still or
throbbing tread,

From the mystery of the living, to the mystery of
the dead.

Each moment is a threshold, that leads invisibly
To grief that glooms, joy that looms, to dull satiety.
We pass to them with passion, and out of them
with peace,

And all the way is struggle, or rapture — and re-
lease.

Each moment is a threshold, to Being's House of
Breath,
Or to the void, silence-cloyed, in Being's House of
Death;
But all we know of either in these words has been
said,
" Today we 're with the living, tomorrow with the
dead."

Each moment is a threshold, but God is in the
House,
God too, we think, somehow to link the Morrows
with the Nows.
Or if He is not, marvel! For man himself is God,
Seeing a world that should be, within a soulless
clod.

MILLICENT PASSES

Don't let him be my pall bearer, don't let him! . . .
Yes, do! For I have loved . . . only him!
But him! . . . give me the morphia . . . And so
Altho I did, then, marry the other,
That half-man, half-squirrel in the cage
Of his small ego spun by smug conceit,
The man I love must bear me to the grave —
At the coffin's head, upon the left side,
That he may know how heavy my heart was.
— What a life! what . . . what a life!
And I was beautiful! . . . give me the morphia . . .
With brow and lips and eyes made to delight,
And with such joy to ripple in my laughter,
You have said so yourself, as only the lark
Winging can take the heart with — such wild joy:
Yet all so vain to hold him that I loved!

— And why, why, I ask . . . appeaselessly!
Another woman has, and he is happy,
Breathing in life as if it were a fragrance:
While I for ten years watched that spinning cage
Of the other whom I loathed — that squirrel soul,
Which could not fancy why my heart grew bitter,
And why I wanted to tear the sky to pieces
And strangle the world in it; or why I pined,
Altho all saw my love . . . of one who now
Shall help — but that! — to lay me under earth.
But that! . . . And yet, let him: on the left side,
Where my dead heart with woe will be so heavy
That it shall weight him down remembering.

— What a life! what . . . what a life!
A childhood torn by temper, rapture, tears;
A girlhood by delirious ideals.
Love — a happy day or two in the woods,
The enchanted woods of it, thro which we pass
And find our peace, or wander and are lost.
Knowledge, then, that bliss is brevity.
Then marriage to that other, at whose side

In the bed of earth I now must go to lie . . .
Tho it is false, I say! . . . give me the morphia . . .
That I first broke his heart, as mine is broken,
And sent him there! False! . . . He but wore out,
Spinning within his little ego-cage
Of glib desires, that led to vanity:
A cage so wearisome that when I lie
In the earth by him and feel *it* spinning round,
I shall scream out to God, if God there be,
To let me forth, to set me free of him:
For the shame of couching there will be so much
That should the other send me death-flowers,
And the wreaths of them touch me, even thro
The coffin . . . they will wither, if they are lilies,
Before the funeral words are spent. But if . . .
If they are roses, and one is not white,
Lay them upon my breast . . . give me the morphia.
— What a life! What . . . what a death!
Yet I could sing once — and was beautiful! —
Sing! . . . melodies blossomed at my lips.
But were birds, too, ill-mated, they would cease

In time to sing, they too — and boughs become
As bare of music as my breast of peace . . .
Which he I love will never cease to know,
For still he loves music! . . . And when he bears me
Out of those doors, will hear, perhaps, the strains
Of that great funeral march — Chopin's, I played
him —

Sounding within his soul's deep sadnesses —
Hear, but only, only as if for another,
Unless he feels my dead heart's heaviness.
— It is too much! too much! . . . give me the
morphia . . .

Not merely I should die, but all the living,
All earth's abortive millions should lie down
And say, "Whoever made us, God or Chance,
Has but mismade us!" Then there would not
surge

That crying out for love that never comes,
True-mated love for all: which of all things
Can keep faith's universe from falling apart,
And prove God is the mystery that binds it.

Yet he I loved . . . he that I love, believes:
So I too must not pass from life unpraying.
Our Father, which art in Heaven . . . give me the
morphia . . .

THE BROKEN WINGS OF THE YEARS

You have broken the wings of the years, O Death!
Because they were all too swift with joy.
They fly no more from breath to breath
Of happiness by, but trail and cloy.
They fly no more — as the golden plover
Flies, from the tundra's icy hover,
Far, far south, with never a pause,
To palmy zones of the Panamas.

You have broken the wings of the years — alas!
So now their pinions, shaped to soar,
Can only falteringly pass,
With no goal left on any shore.
They flutter along from hour to hour
With no nest left in any bower:
Migrants ever from care to care,
Coming no whence to go no where!

You have broken the wild wings of the years.
No more they weather the gales of woe,
But sink — sodden with sorrow's tears,
Or veer with all despairs that blow.
Too often out of the misty welter
Of doubt do they in vain seek shelter;
Too, too often fold with the night
In sleep unfain of any light!

SEA-HOARDINGS

My heart is open again and the sea flows in,
It shall fill with a summer of mists and winds and
 clouds and waves breaking,
Of gull-wings over the green tide, of the surf's
 drenching din,
Of sudden horizon-sails that come and vanish,
 phantom-thin,
Of arching sapphire skies, deep and unaching.

I shall lie on the rocks just over the weeds that
 drapē
The clear sea-pools, where birth and death in the
 sunny ooze are teeming.
Where the crab in quest of booty sidles about, a
 sullen shape,

Where the snail creeps and the mussel sleeps with
wary valves agape,

Where life is too grotesque to be but seeming.

And the swallow shall weave my dreams with threads
of flight,

A shuttle with silver breast across the warp of the
waves gliding;

And an isle far out shall be a beam in the loom of
my delight,

And the pattern of every dream shall be a rapture
bathed in light —

Its evanescence a beauty most abiding.

And the sunsets shall give sadness all its due,
They shall stain the sands and trouble the tides
with all the ache of sorrow.

They shall bleed and die with a beauty of mean-
ing old yet ever new,

They shall burn with all the hunger for things that
hearts have failed to do,

They shall whisper of a gold that none can borrow.

And the stars shall come and build a bridge of fire
For the moon to cross the boundless sea, with never
a fear of sinking.

They shall teach me of the magic things of life never
to tire,

And how to renew, when it is low, the lamp of my
desire —

And how to hope, in the darkest deeps of thinking.

WANTING THE MOON

“Don’t cry, don’t cry for the moon!”
Her restive heart would croon;
Her restive heart of delights and fears,
Of laughter tangled amid her tears,
“Don’t cry for the moon!”

For she wanted the moon herself; wanted
The shimmering moon of wealth and love,
The moon of rank and fame that haunted
The heavens above her.

She wanted the moon, and so would sing
To any, with odd caprice, “Don’t cry!
Don’t cry for the moon!”—betraying
Her own appeaseless sigh,

“Don’t cry, don’t cry for the moon!”
It broke her peace at last.

It broke her mind and it broke her heart,
And she died in a place that is set apart
For the moon-criers — who do not know
That the moon 's for none — only its glow;
Only its even radiance, cast
On all, with aimless art.

K'U-KIANG

Because the sun like a Chinese lantern
Set in a temple of clouds tonight,
I was back in K'u-Kiang!

Because in a temple of dragon clouds,
As if with incense misty red,
It hung there over the rim of the sea,
I was back in a narrow street,
Where amber faces pass all day,
Going to pay, going to pray,
Going the same old human way
They have gone for a thousand years, men say,
In K'u-Kiang.

And I heard the coolie cry for his fare,
I heard the merchant praise his ware

Of bronze and porcelain set to snare,
In K'u-Kiang!
I saw strange streaming signs in black
With gold and crimson on their back —
Opiate signs in an opiate street;
Where the slip and patter of felt-shod feet
Is old as the sun;
And the temple door
As cool and dark as the night.
And where dim lanterns, swinging there,
As a lure to human grief and care,
Half reveal and half conceal
The ancestral gloom of the gods.

I saw all this with sudden pang,
As if by hashish swept or bhang,
Because the sun, like a Chinese lantern,
Set in a temple of clouds!

THE OLD PIONEERS

The frontiers freeze before us;

Now youth is left behind,

Tho once they ever lured us

To braver vaster valley-lands.

The ice of them is round us,

A hope-arresting rind;

Our feet must travel slower,

And slower thaw the mind.

The frontiers freeze before us,

The dead leaves shiver round us,

Our breath is less within us,

The way is hard to find.

The frontiers freeze before us:

They once were blossoming

With faith and virid vision

Like faery and enchanted lands.

THE OLD PIONEERS

The bliss of youth was on us,
And every dream could bring
Such ardency as melted
All fear that fate could fling.
The frontiers freeze before us,
The sun sets sooner round us,
The night is darker in us,
Our hearts forget to sing.

The frontiers freeze before us,
And will not melt again,
But ever shut us closer
Within the narrow bounds of them.
So now there's only left us
The half-way things of men,
The staked claim kept securely,
The aims that all may ken.
The frontiers freeze before us,
The long wait now is on us,
Until death's frontier calls us
To pass the *final* fen.

A FLORIDA INTERLUDE

(*Naples-on-the-Gulf*)

I

Behind me lie the Everglades,
The mystic grassy Everglades,
Where the moccasin and the Seminole glide
In secret silent Indian ways.
Before me lies the Gulf,
The cup of blue bright tropic waters,
Held to the parched lips of the South
To cool and quench its thirst.

Behind me lie the Everglades,
Before me lies the Gulf,
Which the sunset soon shall change to wine,
A Eucharist for the longing soul.

Its rim of land shall be transformed
To Mexic opal and chrysoprase,
And then shall come the moon
As calm as a thought of Christ.

As calm as a thought of Christ —
Over the cup's sand-rim enchased
With palm and pine, Floridian friends,
Saying their twilight litanies;
While homeward flies the heron
To his island cypress in the swamp,
Which Spanish mosses drape and the moon
Silverly soothes to peace.

II

Behind me lie the Everglades,
Where the bittern wails to the moon's face.
Peace is gone as I wake
And memory in me wails
From the primal swamp, Heredity,
Whence I have come with all the desires

Of creeping, walking, flying things,
To creep or walk or fly.

With all the desires of the earth-creatures;
Yet with a want transcendent,
A want that comes with the glimmer of stars
And pierces to my heart.
A want of the life I have not known,
Of the life unknowable,
In the Everglades of the Universe
Where the Great Spirit glides.

NAQUITA

“Naquita,” he said, “Naquita,
But one thing do I ask:
Bear my dust to the wide plains
And scatter it to the four winds,
That it may ride the mesas,
The buttes and the red arroyas,
And not be shut in a small tomb,
An inn for all comers —
Whose host, the harrowing worm,
Sets no fare forth at all,
Save for himself, but silence.”

And so I took his body
Of death-made alabaster
And bore it, in obedience,
To the place of cruel burning.

I gave his lips to a flame
Stronger than any passion,
And his eyes, that held wide heaven
And all eternity for me.
And I went back to the mesas —
Bearing the world — and God —
In a little urn of dust.

And then — oh hunger of love! —
I was stricken and could not do it.
“ If I scatter his dust,” I said,
“ I scatter my soul to madness.
For if his heart were blowing
On the windy buttes and mesas
My heart would follow after.
But here in a grief-gray urn
I still can hear it beating,
I still can clasp it to me.
He still must wait to ride!

“ For a little while must wait,
Till the flame shall take me too,

And our twin dusts commingled
On the swift mount of the wind
Shall follow all trails that flesh
Can never, never follow.

Yes, over the Plains hurtle
Afar, flame-wedded atoms:
Till the last wind shall cease,
And dust no more be dust,
And life and death be one."

AFTER THEIR PARTING

(*A Woman Speaks*)

You know that rock on a rocky coast,
Where the moon came up, a ruined ghost,
Distorted until her shape almost
Seemed breaking?
Came up like a phantom silently
And dropped her shroud on the red night sea,
Then walked, a spectral mystery,
Unwaking?

You know how, sudden, there came a change,
When she had left the sea's low range,
Its lurid crimson, stark and strange,
Behind her?
How, sudden, her silver self shone thro,

Tranquilly free of the earth's stained hue,
And found a way where the clouds were few
To bind her?

You know this? Then go back some day,
When I have gone the moonless way,
To that dark rock whereon we lay
And waited;
And when the moon has arisen free,
Your soiling doubt shall fall from me,
And eased of unrest your heart shall be,
And sated.

LIFE'S ANSWER

A stroke of lightning stabbed the storm-black sea,
As if it sought the heart of Life thereunder,
And meant to put an end to it utterly; —

Then came thunder —

Wildly applauding thunder.

Riven with fear the foam-crests ran before it,
Hissed by the rain and beaten down to darkness.
A gull rose out of the murk with wings that tore it —
Life's answer to the storm's terrible starkness.

HER HERO

" There 's not a flower of April but shall ring me
A wedding bell," her bridal heart said,
" A wedding bell of bliss when he comes home.
And if they bring me
His name among the dead,
I shall not go in grief — only but in pride
That he shrank not, but as a hero died! "

So to her task she bent; till, it befell:
They brought her his name, set to the brief knell,
" Somewhere in France, dead."
And tho a shell of burning anguish
Shattered her soul's trenches,
Her pride tremorless towered.

Yet there in France, at the grey break of dawn,
A firing-squad, with faces fixt and drawn,
Had only set her "hero" against a wall
And, at a command . . . shot him, for a coward.

AN AVIATOR'S MOTHER

I wake in the night,
And sudden my eyes grope,
High thro the dark of the battle-fields,
For the place where he is flying
Thro thin perilous ether.
In cold dizzy heights
Over the foe I see him,
His soaring plane in a swirl of clouds hidden,
And he, my little boy,
Who once crawled at my feet,
Nor dared to take three steps across my chamber,
He the eagle soul of it!

Ah yes, I see and hear him,
There in the earthless chill,
With iron talons ready

To release swift bombs on sleeping Rhine cities.

And tho I know

That some of them may fall

On simple homes where children dream

As once he dreamt beside me,

I cry him on thro the sky's sickening hazard —

That Freedom may not perish,

And a myriad martyr mother-hearts

In the years to come be wakened

By the high whirring wings that mean destruction.

I cry him on!

And yet how terrible

That out of the nest even the young must spring

To be — thus — Humanity's wild war-eagles!

WINTER FLOODS

Half under the flood are the trees by the river,
The wind is not happy,
The branches shiver,
The dark ice-floes are hurrying down
Like heaps of heavy death.
The hills, brown-hazed, with the trees tremble,
The sun is dazed
And the clouds dissemble.
Spent is my trust, and longing rust
My heart with every breath.

Half under the flood are the trees — and in them
Crows that scold
At the skies and din them.
Worn is the wind and writhen the waves
With the trouble of tales he tells.

A skiff unmoored from its cove is skirling,
Oarless and aimless,
Mutely whirling —
Even as thoughts, unmoored in me,
On a tide that mystery swells.

Half under the flood are the trees — and bushes
Drowned deep
In the drift that pushes.
Out of them whirrs, migrant again,
The wild duck's watery wing.
“ Swift to the South! ” my heart cries after
Her strained flight
With a strained laughter.
For I am chilled, I am winter-filled,
An exile far from the Spring!

DAWN-BLISS

(Naples-on-the-Gulf)

I went out at dawn,
Pelicans were fishing,
Big-beaked, grey and brown;
Little waves were swishing.
Clouds creamed the sky,
As shells creamed the shore;
Wild airy hues of beauty
Round seemed to pour!

I went out at dawn,
Pelicans were floating,
Big beaks on their breasts;
Up the sun came boating.
“ Ship ahoy! ” I cried,

To his golden sail.
Bliss-winds of beauty in me
Broke — to a gale!

I went out at dawn,
Pelicans were winging.
Palms waved passion plumes,
Beach sands were singing.
Stripped, save of strength,
I plunged into the sea
And swam, till the bliss of beauty
Died away in me.

FAIR FLORIDA

O sweet is the earth in Florida,
The darkies croon all winter in the clearing.
The wind sighs a day-long cheery *Ah!*
A sound in the palms worth hearing.
And the sun there never seems to hurry,
The night never comes too soon,
And easy from the heart slips worry,
When the moon comes stealing there, the moon,
When the moon comes stealing in Florida!

The gold of the orange in Florida
Hangs round and ripe all winter in the clearing.
And rarely the soul breathes a weary *Ah!*
For little has the world worth fearing.
The firefly summers in December,

And toil, there, is never too long,
And the heart all day can remember
How the moon comes stealing with a song,
How the moon comes stealing in Florida!

TO A SUICIDE

How did you like your grave last night,

Did you sleep well, my friend?

There was cover enough for you, I know,

For over the earth was laid the snow;

And only a while did the wind blow,

Or the trees bend.

How did you like the grave you made,

To slip into from life?

Had it the quiet that you sought?

The silence, free of sound and thought?

The isolation undistraught

By the old strife?

And was it empty, as you believed,

Of sense, of soul, of God?

Was there no reckoning — or rue?
Were you with all at last quite thro'?
Nothing to want? nothing to do?
Only the clod?

Or was there Something there which bade
 You rise and walk afar?
Out of the shroud, out of the flesh,
Out of the earth's soul-tripping mesh,
Rise and start with strength afresh
 On a new star?

That were impossible, you thought —
 Sure but of sleeping well.
Yet while a bud awakes in May,
While darkness blossoms into day,
While life seems more than atom-sway,
 Who can tell?

I KNOW YOUR HEART, O SEA!

I know your heart, O Sea!
You are tossed with cold desire to flood earth utterly;
You run at the cliffs, you fling wild billows at beaches,
You reach at islands with fingers of foam to crumble them;
Yes, even at mountain tops you shout your purpose
Of making the earth a shoreless circle of waters!

I know your surging heart!
Tides mighty and all-contemptuous rise within it,
Tides spurred by the wind to champ and charge
and thunder —
Tho the sun and moon rein them —
At the troubling land, the breeding-place of mortals,

Of men who are ever transmuting life to spirit,
And ever taking your salt to savor their tears.

I know your tides, I know them!
“Down,” they rage, “with the questing of men, and
 crying!
With their continents — cradles of grief and de-
 spair!
Better entombing waters for them, better our deeps
 unfathomed,
Where birth is soulless, life goalless, death toll-less
 for all,
And where dark ooze enshrouds past resurrection! ”

Ah yes, I know your heart!
I have heard it raving at coast-lights set to reveal
 you,
I have watched it foam at ships that sought to defy
 you,
I have seen it straining at cables that cross you,
 bearing whispers hid to you,

Or heaving at waves of the air that tell your hurricanes.

I know, I know your heart!
Men you will sink, and shores will sing; but a shore
shall be man's forever,
From whence his lighthouse soul shall signal the
Infinite,
Whose fleets go by, star after star, bearing their
unknown burden
To a Port which only eternity shall determine!

NOX MIRABILIS

I wonder if earth is led at night by spirits,
That swim in space before it,
As was our ship that night on the Red Sea,
When dolphins swam in the phosphorescent bow-
wash,
With a beauty of body-motion more than earthly,
And lured us on, with a lithe and ghostly radiance,
In and out and under, magically;
And when stars hung so humid in the heavens
As to make their soft immeasurable spaces
Seem but another phosphorescent sea,
With the pointed bow of the moon-boat pushing thro
them?

I wonder if earth is beautifully led so?
For if it be, I will ask of destiny

To let me, when I am changed into a spirit,
Swim at its bow, shaking a luminous sense
Of mystery and ethereal magic back
To those who have taken passage from the port
Of Birth, thro the Red Sea of Life, to Death.

FLUTTERERS

In the moist flowing midnight of our garden
Does the firefly, who lights, there, its sundial,
Of time's silent mystic numbers know?
As little as do we of heaven's dial,
Which faint eternal star-flies enkindle
With constellated wandering and glow!

At our mute open window does the grey moth,
Who beats toward a warm sense of brightness,
Conceive the vastity of life's desire?
Less than do we — whom love's elusive urgenc
Ever allures with wings of want to flutter
Toward Life's unappeasive blossom-fire!

SHIPS AND THE SEA

I have been thinking of ships and the sea again,
Ships and the sea!

Of flooding surf and joy to be free again,
Fever-free.

I have been thinking of white foam blowing,
Of gulls dipping, of tides flowing,

I have been longing for winds past knowing
To wing by me!

I have been thinking of white sails vanishing
On the blithe blue,
Till from my heart their beauty is banishing
Care's harsh hue.

Till I can hear in the wave's far ringing
The changeless, charmed, ineffable singing

Of Life, the siren immortal, flinging
 Spells ever new.

I have been thinking of ships and the moon again,
 Ships and the stars!
Of swinging bows and a world in tune again,
 Of tall spars
That point toward ports that are dreams — till wak-
 ing
At dawn there comes, on the glad gaze breaking,
 Ultimate peace from a green palm shaking
 By coral bars.

IMPERTURBABLE

Three times the fog rolled in today, a silent shroud,
From which the breakers ran like ghosts, moaning
and tumbling.

Three times a startled sea-bird cried aloud,
On the wind stumbling.

But I cast my net with never a fear, tho wraiths in
me

And birds of wild unrest were stirring and starting
and crying.

For I knew that under the sway of every sea
There is calm lying.

A TRAVELLER, LOOKING BACK

My heart was sick to see them
In all their mingled wonder,
The Orient lands and peoples,
And so at last — I went.
And now I 'm like a lover
Whose first love long has faded,
Yet who would give all glory
To feel its fire unspent.

To feel, as then, dawn hueing
The snows of Fugiyama
To immaterial ruby,
Then to a priestly white.
To watch the amber evening,
With crimson sun setting,
Along the walls and towers
That gave Pekin its might.

To see the first palm swaying
In strange Kualalumpur,
To hear the wind-bells tinkle
On stranger Shwe-Dagohn.

To watch along Sumatra
The Bay of Bengal counting
Its fevered pulsing surf-beat
With timeless undertone.

To gaze, then, where Benares,
With ghats and temples shining,
With saints and yogi surging
Resounds to Vedic hymns;
Where Taj Mahal's three bubbles
Blown magic on the morning
Bewitch the road to Agra,
That in enchantment swims.

And, last, behold the Sphinx smile
To Egypt and Sahara,
Or the eternal tenting
Of Pharaoh's pyramids.

Or, down the Mount of Olives,
Toward the Gate called Golden,
Watch how the Slavic pilgrim
So reverently thrids.

To see — as once I saw them! . . .
Ah, not in any faring
To phantom-far Sumatra,
To Shwe-Dagohn or Taj,
Shall I again recapture
The first keen quivering magic
That for a mystic season
Made all else seem mirage.

A CHANCE ENCHANTMENT

In far-off China I heard it,
As we paused by a city of the desert,
Whose hosts of sand, blown ever by the wind,
Climbed high over crenelated battlements
That had beaten off Genghis Khan.
And it fell upon the air there softly,
A low eerie Orient *tinkle* . . .
And I never shall know from whence it came,
From what strange thing with what strange name:
But even as a dewdrop catches the sky
It seemed to have caught the vast numb cry
Of the ancient sorrow of China.
It seemed to have caught, in a single tone,
A sorrow, a beauty, an alien moan
That never will let my heart alone

Till the sands of time sweep over it.
In far-off China I heard it,
Where the desert winds go by!

HERAT

The city of Herat
Has five great gates;
The Kandahar, the Hutab-chak,
The Malik and Irak;
And on the east the Kushk Gate,
Thro which the sun came,
When Herat was a splendor
And not a ruin's name.

The city of Herat
Has four great walls,
For caravans and strange bazaars,
For mosques and tall minars,
For sepulchres of saints and khans
In gardens strewn with streams —

Whose names are now forgotten,
Or but as dreams of dreams.

The city of Herat
Is one mile square,
But one — yet all the bales of fate
Have entered in its every Gate,
Have crowded in its four walls
And gone the ways of time;
And now Herat knows only
That it has been sublime.

A MOHAMMEDAN TO THE MOON

It is well, oh houri of Allah,
That you draw an airy veil
Of silver over your face,
Lest I should gaze too long
At a beauty overstrong,
And so become unfitted
For a mere human place.

It is well that, in His harem,
You lean from a lattice of stars
I never can hope to climb.
For were I lifted near
To your loveliness, I fear
My soul would seek to ravish
You from Him, O Sublime!

It is well, oh houri of Allah!
And so I do but pray
That you tell Him this for me:
That never within the sky,
His palace, do I espy
Your shape, without adoring
In you His deity!

A PRIEST'S SONG

(India)

Mango wood and deodar wood
And sandalwood and aloe wood
Are sweet and good to make incense
For any temple shrine;
And crystal from the camphor tree
Distilled, with rose and patchouli;
But better than these are simple thoughts
 Of hearts that are divine —
 Of hearts that look on life and say
With fragrant pity night or day,
“ My brother's grief and woe, I know,
 Are, even as well, mine! ”

NIPPONESE

A dim inletted coast
Where pine-trees tend on temples
That look out over the sea
For the sun 's coming and moon 's going,
For wind and rain and snow,
Whose elemental voices worship
Thro the encircling year.

And out on the sea a sampan
Floating, as if awaiting
To bear away from the temples
The pleadings of the importunate,
The incense of their yearnings,
The offerings of their toil and pain,
The flowing of their tears.

A WORD'S MAGIC

Do you remember Etajima,
And how, upon a moon-fogged sea,
As ghostly as ever a tide shall be,
We passed an island silently?

And how a low voice in the gloom
Of the temple pine-trees leaning there
Said *sayonara* to one somewhere
Unseen in the shadow-haunted air?

Just *sayonara*: but it seemed
The soul of all farewells that night,
The sigh of all withdrawn delight,
The sound of love's last rapture-rite.

And now, after long years, it comes
Again from isles of memory

To bring once more to birth in me
The breath of all lost witchery.

Yes, one low word of parting, now
Echoing, thro the fog of years,
Has touched my heart with beauty's tears,
And youth thro all things reappears.

A CHARM TO BRING CHILDREN

(*Egypt, 100 A.D.*)

Take twelve leaves of the male palm
And write on each the name of a god.
Wed each leaf to a lotus bloom
And bind the twain to a bulrush rod.
Walk with the stem betwixt your breasts
By the flooding Nile when the young moon shows,
Shadowy-pregnant, over the night.
Then — making the sign of Horus —
Thrice to the left and thrice to the right —
Call to the wind of the Desert,
Great is the lady Isis!

HEARTS TO MEND

Said the warm South Wind,
“Have you any hearts to mend?
I have salt from the sea,
I have solder from the sun,
I can make them good as new,
(Have you any hearts to mend?)
They shall hold again the dew
Of youth when I am done!

“Have you any hearts to mend?
I have come from the South,
And a heart that is sad
Or asunder with the years,
I can make as good as new,
(Have you any hearts to mend?)
Hearts rent with fate or rue,
Hearts torn with throbbing fears?

" I can heal them all again.
I have salt from the sea,
I have solder from the sun
For the broken or the worn.
I can make them good as new,
(Have you any hearts to mend?)
I 've the skill of dreams come true
For the wretchedest who mourn!

HUNGER

The million twigs of the trees are black, against the
gray of the twilight.

Only the slender moon is alive and slips thro them
away.

All else is wintry numb,

All else is wintry dumb,

For even the squirrel knows that he cannot dig his
earth-hid store,

So hard is the frost; but keeps to his hole and does
not peep from the door.

I alone am hunting food — for my soul, in the
faded sky-light,

I alone walk with the moon till she glides behind
the day.

Food, and want of love, are the never-ending needs
that haunt us.

Love I have and food — but the mind and heart
and soul are strange.

Their hungers sweep from afar;

They crave a dream or a star;

They crave a food that neither winter nor spring
nor autumn hold,

That words can never, in all the worlds where
speech has bloomed, unfold.

Nor shall an eternity have satieties enough to daunt
us,

Life's inexhaustible mystery still will make our
hunger range.

JUDGMENT

(During a Blizzard)

Today the City has put on ermine
And sits in the court of its thoughts
To judge if the Wind, whose icy dagger
Is piercing the life of the poor,
Is chief of the cold conspirators
In league with the felon, Death.
And the sentence is: *Not guilty*,
Tho word newly has come
Of a child bitterly frozen
At a mother's milkless breast.
For the City, judging, knows
That not the Wind, but itself,
And itself alone is the murderer.

MY NEIGHBOR

I did not know my neighbor. Two back yards
And an alley were the gulf that lay between us.
His face across that gulf I had not seen;
Only his lighted windows sent towards
My window all his wonted ways of living,
Dull, as they seemed; perhaps a little mean.
He was no more to me than shapes that give
A shadowy human fringe to thought's existence.
He could have died and I should not have missed
More than his movements, vague and fugitive.
— Then came the crashing horror of his fate.
He had walked there with passions in him burning
Such as made Oedipus of the gods learn
To count no man, till death, as fortunate;
He had grown plants within his kitchen garden
While tragedy grew in him desolate:

Grew till he could no more its twine retard,
But tangled in the tendrils that wound fiery
About his heart — the tendrils of desire —
Had cried aloud, and then, with lips set hard
— Had gone to a drab rendezvous of sin
To meet again his mistress, whom in frenzy
He fancied false to him; as passion when
Remorseful will; and told her she had been
For the last time a lure and should no longer
Be let to live and snare the lust of men.
And so, tho her eyes pled against the wrong,
Had kissed her, cursed her, shot her — then, sore
weeping,
Himself: meaning to put all sin to sleep
Past any pain's distress, however strong.
— But in this *too* had failed; for even as *she*
Did death prove but a weak perfidious wanton,
Turning the bullet from his brain aslant
Into his eyes that never more shall see.
So doubly now in prison lies my neighbor,
In that of blindness and of felony.

Which ended what, you see, was like a play
For me — since two back yards and one small alley
Sufficed for a gulf, an infinite interval,
Between men made by God in the same way.

CHANT TERRESTRIAL

How old on the spherical earth is man?
How long was it ere a sudden thought
Severed him from his brother-beasts,
 Taught him to walk,
 Taught him to talk?
How old is he on the spherical earth?
How old shall he be when earth is cold
And gives to the dead moon ray for ray
Of blue chill phosphorescent mould?

How old on the spherical earth is man?
Does he a thousand earths in space
Inhabit, and, uncertain why,
 Face to the sky,
 Face, and die?
How old is he on the spherical earth?

How old shall he be when time has rolled
Across Creation's birth-expanses
The last star life and death enfold?

AN INTERIOR

Because you cannot sit with me
And read a book when night has come,
But press your hands upon your breast
And give your eyes to all unrest.
Because at windows and at doors
You glance, and wait the least wind-tap
Of pines against the prescient pane,
And if it does not come are fain,
Suddenly starting from your chair,
To go and see what may be there,—
I know that you can only care
For that which is not anywhere.

For that which calls without a voice,
For that which moves without a shape,
For that which wills without a choice;
For passion that is yet escape.

THE COURTESAN

I sell my body to all men,
Even the priest has purchased it,
With such an ecstasy, I swear,
As he denies the Infinite.
No crucifix has ever known
Such kisses as my lips enthrone,
And since I can from thence divine
That men, who are the “ sons of God,”
Most worship at the flesh’s shrine,
I can be sure, beyond distrust,
Of one truth more, That God is Lust.

THE SISTERS

Three tall chimneys out of my window rise,
Like the Fates, the daughters of Night,
With the smoky tangle of their hair about them.

In the grey sky or the blue sky,
In sun or rain or snow,
They stand, blended together, shadowing human
destiny.

For one rises above the making of cradles,
And one above the weaving of worldly raiment,
And one, darkly apart, above the sad shaping of
coffins
For the frailty of those whose thread of life is
shorn,

Who are cut off swiftly, suddenly,
And shrouded under the lasting garment of earth.

Three tall chimneys out of my window rise.
Round them the city is born and lives and dies.

HIS DREAM

I saw a dead man yesterday
With a dream frozen upon his lips.
Like one made of immortal clay

He lay:

As if a vision vast and dim
Had touched the heart and soul of him,
As might the wings of seraphim
In flight.

Yet the one vision of his life
Had only been, I found,
To earn, by an unceasing strife,
Ten dollars weekly for his wife!

MISTRESS IMMORTAL

Ah, little moon!
When I see you there
Enceinte in the West,
Bearing a promise
Of light to be,
I know all lovers
That beauty lures
Have been, somehow,
Your paramours,
Little moon!

For softly you enter
The chambers of all
Or meet them silverly
In the wood —
Where leaves, little poets

Of the green trees,
Are ever inspired
By every breeze. . . .
Or on the streets you accost them.

And then there is nothing
To do, if lonely,
But give their passion
To you only;
To you, little moon,
Little girl moon,
Who lure all hearts —
You only!

TO RICHARD W. KNOTT

(December 27, 1917)

Dead, you are dead, my friend?
Is all your being hushed?
Your mind of torrent might,
Your heart of hot insight?
Dead? Never again
To fight as a man with men?
Your soul so swiftly flushed
Now into silence crushed?

Dead? This is the end?
No rising more at dawn
To fling tense phrase and thought
Onto the page, and on?
No rising up to flash,

Out over the questing throng,
The word that should be penned,
The warning brave and strong?

Dead? and the city round
Now muffles low your name?
Some with affection's knell,
Some with regret or blame?
Some with a lie, yet all
With deep-enforced respect
For a strength none could neglect?
For a freedom none could tame?

Dead? Oh, I am hurt,
Who loved you, fought you, praised.
I am hurt, and all amazed,
And dazed, bitterly dazed.
For friendship knows that death
Will come, yet calls it crazed
When one beloved is glazed
So swiftly by its breath.

Yes, I am hurt, hurt,
And numbly know the loss,
And how death's dreadest blow
Comes *after* the grave's woe.
For where shall I find years
Again such ties to twine
As bound your ways to mine?
I shall not — well I know!

Yet peace: your task is done,
Full-hearted to the last.
Citizen, lover, friend,
Your laurels are amassed.
Citizen, hater, foe,
Thinker and scholar, go!
And let who has not failed,
Nor ever humanlyailed,
Nor once a false hope hailed,
Small honor to you show!

CLAIRVOYANCE

The clock, like a heart, beating in the night
darkness,
Is filling the house with the pale flow of time,
That pulses plangently thro the thick silence
Into each hall and chamber . . .
And seems to waken the shadowy past
And the voice of vanished voices,
And the laughter of them and the sorrowing sighs
and tears.

And, like a clock, my heart is filling *you*,
O body-house of me,
With the flow of years that are gone:
In every vein calling to life again
Grey memory shapes vanished from sense and soul;
And out of the Nowhere softly strangely assembling
Vain vibrances and voices of Nevermore.

NIGHTWARD

The crake cries lone on the brink of the bog,
The heron mounts from the mists of the pool,
The time for the owl to see draws near,
The time for the bat to flit in the cool.

The stars grow ripe for the moon to reap.
The hour of the moth is the hour of thought.
Why is a leaf that lifts, and is still,
With a sense of infinite sadness fraught?

A FLORIDA BOATING SONG

Down thro Florida keys,
From island, to island!

Down thro Florida keys,
Where mangrove roots dip in the seas!

A myriad tangled roots
From each palmetto byland,
Oyster-encrusted roots mid which
The heron wades in the shallow shades!

Down thro Florida keys,
Around them, between them,
Thro low green Florida keys,
So low they scarce seem born of the seas!
Where pouchy pelicans roost
On cypresses that lean them
Out over the idle lap of the tide
That comes and goes with balmy flows!

Down thro Florida keys,
Thro mazes on mazes
Of ripple-encircled keys,
Where sun and wind play as they please!
Where the eaglet, high in air,
 Or the wild white ibis, dazes
Eyes that follow them up the blue,
As the heart would do, the heart too!

Down thro Florida keys
I 'm going, I 'm going!
Thro low green Florida keys
And greener glades of Florida seas!
And this is all I know,
 That all in the world worth knowing
Is joy like that of the tarpon's leap
In air divine with the warm sunshine!

UNFATHOMABLE

On all the seas of space
New worlds forever come,
And old forever go,
With mystic ebb and flow.
On all the seas of life,
There is such wax and wane
Of mystery and pain
As make us deeply know,—

That not God's very self
Can fathom the Universe:
To Him as unto us
It is incredulous.
Such vastity it has
That His infinitude
Can only thro it brood
And ask *why* it is thus.

AN EVENING ETCHING

Little rivers at twilight,
Little wintry rivers,
Running between brown trees
With mistletoed branches;
Catching dark shivery shadows
Of boughs into your bosoms,
And a pale silvery star
Between burnt clouds of gold . . .

Little lowly rivers,
How sad your spirit shimmers!
All the land's rainy loneliness
Is running in your flow;
While farm-lights faintly quiver
And brown hills freeze about you
And the music of the sheep-bells
Falls silent in the fold.

A HEART'S CRY

I think of mountains
In lonely shapelessness
Under the twilight
Of far countries.

I think of the drop
Of precipices
Thro deathly thousands
Of feet of darkness.

I think of the torrents
That shatter the silence
With tortured turbulence
Far down in them.

Yes, and of glooms,
Of granite chasms,

Where God Himself,
God even, is lonely!

And then I moan . . .
For never a spot
Has earth as lonely
As is my heart!

Never a torrent
Torturing silence
And cutting thro granite,
As grief thro me!

Never a gulf
So deep with terror,
As sudden remembrance
That you are dead!

A MODERN STOIC

Questions scuttle across his brain
And gnaw like rats at his heart,
Gnaw — as if it were cheese.

For philosophy can not trap them,
Its doors spring open again.
And forgetfulness is futile,
Since cracks of memory come in it.
And the golden bars of love are weak,
Too weak to shut them out.

So scornfully he endures
The feeding of each doubt,
With a dull, silent sense
Of a deeply accepted universe;
And waits till his heart, withered with age,
Is left to dry indifference.

PATHS

Crushing in my hand
The bay as I pass,
Drinking in its fragrance
With the sea's scent,
While gull-wings write
Poems white and fast
On the blue sky
That is soft with content;
Crushing in my hand
The bay and the juniper,
While I record
Each line the gulls write,
I go by the sea path
Down to the sea's edge,
I go by heart paths
Deep into delight.

Simple is my joy
As the little sandpiper's,
Who follows beside me
With silvery song;
Blither than the breeze,
That skims great billows
Nor knows how deep
Is their flow — or strong.
Simple is my joy,
A sunny sense-sweetness,
Full of bird-bliss,
Bay-warmth, spray-leap.
Mysteries there are
And miseries beneath it,
But sunk, like wrecks,
Far down in the deep.

NEED OF STORM

(Naples-on-the-Gulf)

On the green floor of the Gulf the wind is walking,
Printing it with invisible feet;
The tide is talking.

Purple and grey the horizon walls them round
With purpler clouds.
They wander in it like guests gently astray
In a house deep mystery shrouds.

I do not know the speech of the tide,
For too articulate have become my years:
Beauty brings only words, not breathless tears.

So the young heron fishing there in the foam
On the sand's edge,

Would once have taken my spirit far, far home
To the infinite, when he vanished thro the gloam.

But now I am left behind on the beach — a shell
That no more knows the wonder of the sea's swell,
Or more than the empty echo of its knell.

To sea then, Life, wildly to sea with a storm
Sweep me again,
From the smooth dull beach of custom where I lie,
That I may feel once more
The swaying surge of passion thro me swarm!

MOMENTS

I

A GREEK, DYING

(B.C. 400)

Come nearer, Charon . . .
I cannot step so far, into your boat.
For I shall need some breath to say farewell
To her you waft me from,
Ere death sets us afloat.

II

A CHINESE POET

(By the Whang-Ho)

Today the lightest breeze
Takes tribute from the trees.
Golden leaves flutter down,
Crimson leaves, purple, brown,
On the tide, past the town . . .

Down!

I walk along the shore,
Like many gone before,
And sadly ask, What matters it,
One leaf, or life, more?

III

DIVINATION

I gaze deeply into the sky's crystal,
Longing to read the years.
I see clouds swirling there . . .
A bird quiver across them . . .
Then out of them, falling, an autumn leaf.

The cloud-swirl I have known;
The quivering bird have been;
Am I the falling leaf? . . .

IV

MOMENTS

A crow caws,
On the pine tops,
In the sun.
Silence.
Eternity seems begun.

Again the caw,
Where the pine tops
And sky blend.
Shrillness.
Eternity seems to end.

V

A PAGAN'S CREED

I will not boast, for the wanton Gods are strong,
And the Fates have many a secret ambush laid,
Yet to myself alone will I belong,
And of myself alone will be afraid!

VI
YOUTH

Gazing into a crystal of joy-dew
Youth sees all heaven shining for it, blue,
Till clouds begin to pass in darkling strife,
Then the dew falls, and, lo; it sees — life!

A MODERN CHANTEY

All around the world I have heard tides southing,
Under pine or palm, over rock, reef or sand;
North, East, or South, where the night's quick at
snuffing
The candle of the day out, with an creepy hand!

All around the world! And I hope to God I'll
never
Fossilize on a shore, or rot in a town.
Evolution in the brine began, the wise assever.
Let it end when men no more in ships to sea go down.

Chorus: *When no more*
Men no more
In ships to sea go down!

SONGS TO A. H. R.

I

FREE

O were your heart not wide, dear,
And were your soul not high,
And were not both so deep, too,
Deep as the April sky,
I should not find love freedom,
But know a need to range
All heaven and hell — a prisoner
Pining for space and change.

But since there 's depth within you
To hang my moon and stars,
Since I have not to beat vain wings
Against offending bars,

I find all other spaces
That lie *beyond* our love
Are prison — all alluring worlds
Below me or above.

II

STILL!

Glassed in the sea
The gulls glide past,
Boats swing at anchor,
Full is the tide —
Full as my heart,
Now waking at dawn,
Of love for you
Who sleep at my side!

All thro a night
Of soft moon-fall
Thus have you slept
With tidal breath.
Wake, oh awaken,

The darkness is gone,
Light, that is love,
Still masters death!

III

CALLS

Bird calls bird in deeps of the woodland,
Love calls love in deeps of the heart..
Over green meads we go to the music
Out of the glad May earth a-start.

Cloud calls cloud to dance on the skylands,
Dream calls dream to dance in our eyes.
So it has been with a million lovers,
So it shall be, till the last love dies.

IV

THE OLD NEED

Tonight I saw the new moon, while the vesper bells
were ringing,
A slender silver breath it seemed, swung on the
April skies.

Soft apple blossoms under it in white throngs were
springing,
And blossom-thoughts of you within my heart be-
gan to rise.

I saw the moon, I heard the bells, I felt the silver
rapture
Of stars that soon would blossom on the purple
tree of night.
But from a Universe in bloom I only sought to
capture
Soft-petalled words — but three — to tell again
love's vernal might.

V

WHEN

Some night we shall come here
For the last time,
Hear the last whippoorwill,
Watch the last firefly,
See the last hill

Die into the darkness,
Ere is made the moon.
Some night we shall come here . . .
Shall it be soon?

Some night we shall come here,
Then — never more.
One of us shall have gone,
Over earth's last hill,
Infinitely on:
Out into a Vastness
Whence a lesser glow
Even than the firefly's
Back to us can flow.

Some night we shall come here,
Then the one left
Shall not dare hark again,
Or upon stars gaze,
But shrink, bereft,

Backward from the heartbreak

Hid in memory.

Some night we shall come here . . .

When shall it be?

TO THE AFTERNOON MOON, AT SEA

Take care, O wisp of a moon,
Vague on the sunny blue above the sea,
Or the gull flying across you
Will pierce your veil-thin shape with his sharp
wing!

Take care, or the wind will wilt you,
As he does the clouds snowily drifting by you,
And diffuse you over the sky, a silvery mist,
To give more cool to the day!

Take care, so near the horizon,
Or a phantom skipper, one who has long been
drowned,
Will reach above it and seize you
And make you his sail to circle the world forever!

134 TO THE AFTERNOON MOON, AT SEA

Take care, take care! for frailty
Is the prey of the strong, and you, a wraith of it,
Have yet a long while to go before nightfall
Brings you to sure effulgence!

INSUBSTANTIALITIES

A misty moonlit sky, a moonlit sea,
A soul moonlit, the misty soul of me,
And nothing else but a sigh of misty air
And a firefly like a drop of phosphor-dew
Hung on the humid dimness — then, not there.

All is a dissolution and a dream,
A world that is not but can only seem,
A world of mist distilled from moonlit space
And insubstantial save to an earthless soul
That in moonlight can find a biding-place.

THE HERDING

Quietly, quietly in from the fields
Of the grey Atlantic the billows come,
 Like sheep to the fold.
Shorn by the rocks of fleecy foam,
They sink on the brown seaweed at home;
And a bell, like that of a bellwether,
 Is scarcely heard from the buoy —
Save when they suddenly stumble together,
 In herded hurrying joy,
Upon its guidance — then soft music
 From it is tolled.

Far out in the murk that follows them in
Is heard the call of the fog-horn's voice,
 Like a shepherd's — low.
And the strays as if waiting it seem to pause

And lift their heads and listen — because
It is sweet from wandering ways to be driven,
 When we have fearless breasts,
When all that we strayed for has been given,
 When no want molests
Us more — no need of the tide's ebbing
 And tide's flow.

FULL TIDE

Sea-scents, wild-rose scents,
Bay and barberry too,
Drench the wind, the Maine wind,
That gulls are dipping thro,
With soft hints, sweet hints,
With lull, lure and desire;
With memory-wafts and mysteries
And all the ineffable histories
Made when the sea and land meet,
And the sun lends nuptial fire.

Sea-foam, and dream-foam,
And which is which, who knows,
When all day long the heart goes out
To every wave that blows,
That blossoms on the bright tide,

Then sheds a shimmering crest
And yields its tossing place to one
Whose blooming is as quickly done —
For beauty is ever swift — begot
Of rapture and unrest.

Sea-deeps, and soul-deeps,
And where shall faith be found
If not within the heart's beat
Or in the surging sound
Of the sea, which is the earth's heart,
Beating with tireless might;
Beating — tho but a tragedy
Life seems on every land and sea;
Beating to bring all breath, somehow,
Out of despair's blight.

ON THE MAINE COAST

The rocks, lean fingers of the land,
Reach out into the sea
And cool themselves, all day long,
In the tide drippingly.

They catch the seaweed in them
And the starfish on their tips,
And gulls that light
And the swift flight
Of swallows skimming grey and white —
And sometimes sunken ships.

The moon, God's perfect silver,
With which He pays the world
For toil and quest and day's unrest,
Is washed on them and swirled.
And avidly they seize it,

Then let it slip away,
Only again
And yet again
To grasp at it — as eager men
At joy no hand can stay.

SÉANCE

Hovering wings of terns
Over the rock-pools flutter,
For the tide, ebbed far out,
Seems to stumble and stutter;
Seems like a spirit lost,
Unable to come again
Back to the wonted ways and days
Of ever-wanting men.

And the moon, a medium
Trance-pale, is laying her light
Over its surge — till, lo,
It turns from the deep and night.
And the spirit-word it brings
Is the message of all time,
That doubt is only the ebb of faith,
Which ever reflows sublime!

OVERWORN

“ Shall I ever sleep again? ” he said, in the night-time.

“ Health is gone, hope gone, and joy is looking back at me!

Looking with forgetful eyes at a dear delight-time,
Ere the slug of age, and of slow despair’s blight,
Had trailed, thro my heart, disillusion’s sullen
slime!

“ Shall I ever sleep again? My life ’s a weary hour-glass,

That empties, and turns again, and empties, without cease,

While leaf, then snow, falls, and April bud and flower pass

Around the heavy sands of it, that only have the power

To sigh, every grain of them that slips thro me,
‘Alas!’

“ Shall I ever sleep again? Ah yes, I am but tired
now,
Overborne, overworn, with reaching or regret.
And hope’s hue, sleep’s dew, that in the murk are
mired now,
Will rise thro my heart again until it is inspired
To rest above the cry of the when, why and how! ”

EXTREME UNCTION

(In a French Hospital)

1917

“ Is Anyone there in Heaven? ”
She asked, with her eyes on a star.
“ Is Anyone there to hear me?
I am Jeanne Marie Cinquemars.
Is Anyone there? I am dying,
And since death may end all,
I would only know ”— she listened —
“ If France shall live or fall!

“ Is Anyone there? I have given,
Or lost, all a woman can.
And now I am dying — ravished
By one who once was a man.

Is Anyone there to hear me?
Then let my enemy
Be shriven — but me never
If France dies utterly! ”

A WAR WINTER

(1917-1918)

Like unaccoutred armies on the hill
The trees stand shivering in the wintry chill.
The crows fly to them, couriers of ill,
Saying each field is ice, and every rill.

And the wind hurls
A blast of death
With every breath.

The sky pours down a wheeling white barrage
Of hail and snow; and a grey camouflage
Of gloom is sent — a creeping cold mirage
Of the bleak night
That hides wild hosts
In dark outposts.

Twilight is settling like the death of God
Upon an earth that's but a frozen clod,
And that a deeper pall of snow will sod,
 Burying deep
 All trace of Him,
 From rim to rim.

TO AMERICA AT WAR

O my America, I could avow
None ever had a country till this hour,
When men have found within their hearts the power,
Fighting for more than country, to endow
The souls of Liberty, half-born till now,
With strength to link the patriot's lesser plea
Unto the larger of Humanity —
Which sees at last that war must end, and how!

Fight, then, the fight for Freedom, as of old,
And even more for Union! For, apart,
Nations will ever stab each to the heart,
And Freedom for a pottage mess be sold.
Fight for the greatest flag ever unfurled,
For one to encompass you — and all the world!

STORM AND LULL

(During the Great Battles of July, 1918)

Last night the sea was lashed by rain
And swept by fog — as were the fields
Of battle by fierce shell and gas —
But now wide calm has come to pass.
The lighthouse, listless, white, and lone,
Stands on the foreland steriley,
As if it never would need again
To bleed its warning ray to men:
Stone does it seem, and only stone.

The clouds hang on the sky as still
As windless, rainless tatters can,
Empty of aim and void of stress,
Of memory and forgetfulness.

Neutral upon a sea and sky
That have declared neutrality
To every warring element,
They do not even seem forespent,
Nor fain either to live or die.

There is a gull somewhere a-wing
And smoke on the horizon line,
To tell me hunger is not dead
Or life put utterly to bed.
In the blue coma of the sea
And air they seem a karma, left
By the old world to recreate
Another — that shall meet its fate —
And pass on to heredity.

And even as I gaze the strange
Reincarnation has begun,
The wind has swept away the sun,
The calm is like a dream undone.
The lighthouse lowers, the waves glance

With a new birth-cry, and I feel
Life, reawakened to its fate
From a brief moment's opiate,
Surge on to victory in France!

TO PRESIDENT WILSON

(October, 1918)

Woodrow Wilson, master of patience,
Master of silence, master of speech;
Master amid the world's war-frenzy
Of clear wisdom's inward reach;
Watcher of raging civilizations
Till the one righteous hour arrives
When you can speak for all nations,
Great is your guidance now that shrives
Both friend and foe of base soul-gyves!

Woodrow Wilson, lofty listener
At the great heart of Destiny;
Hearing above all feverous hatred
Justice breathing what should be;

Still for a peace that shall not perish
Stand — for if ever a Providence
Comes from the Universe to nourish
Men in their woe, and lead them hence,
Near us now is its Immanence!

THANKSGIVING, 1918

Gray flights of cloud pour from the North,
But khakied leaves, skirling,
Are swept by the wind forward,
Or leap high up at the branches
As if with a last desire for life,
Ere beaten down in the forest
They lie — to be blown away into brooks or hollows.

Then lo, I am giving thanks —
As cloud and wind cease —
That now our khakied lads in the far Argonne
No longer are leaping up to fall forward,
And be beaten down in the bloody mire and tangle
Of the Forest's undergrowth,
But are glowing with victory-warmth in Luxem-
bourg!

A REVOLUTIONIST'S DESPAIR

(During the Bolshevik Reign of Terror)

Wanton, and more than wanton, is this world,
That can debauch all virtues of the soul;
Ravage the fairest dream ever unfurled
By Faith; of virgin Hope take any toll.
That with hot hands of rioting can rape
Freedom, until anarchic and unclad,
She stalks, over restraint, a shameless shape,
Murderous and licentious, sheerly mad.
That even of Humanity's pure bride,
Pity, can make a bitter prostitute,
Ready to entertain Revenge and Loot
When she has seen a people crucified.
Yes, ready even to force, at their pain-call,
Her sister virtues like herself to fall!

A MOTHER'S DIRGE

Hurry, O gulls, across the sunset,
Hurry off to your far sea-home!
Cry as you fly, nor ever once let
Night take you, and wild sea-gloam
(For the wind and tide are rising!)

Wilder darkness *has* overtaken
Me: no wings had I to escape
Death, whose breath as a pall was shaken
Over my boy's sweet soldier shape
(While the battle-tide was rising!)

POET AND PEOPLE

Farid, the Sufi poet, the maker of attar of roses,
Was seized by a soldier of Genghis, whose hordes
ravished the East;
Was set for sale in the market; and heard the cry
to the buyers,
“ Who gives me a thousand dirhams? who covets a
poet-priest? ”

And answer came, from a passer, a scorner of mys-
tery-mongers,
A shah for whom a rose was a rose, and the soul
of it but dust,
“ I buy him, to keep my dung-hill, his Allah-lays to
find there;
For says he not that Allah in *all* things must be —
must? ”

"Take him!" the captor answered.—But "Hold!"

Farid cried proudly,

Swept by a sense immortal, song oft thro him had sent.

Then, as his exaltation compelled his captor's wonder,

"A fairer bid will follow!"—The passer mocking went.

"Then who, who bids for the poet?"—Again a passer answered,

"I! . . . A bundle of fodder!" . . . Farid was flung from pride,

From faith that he was immortal. And so to the soldier said he,

"Take it, for I am worthless. Allah in me has died."

"Lying dog of a rhymster, die too, then!" raged the captor,

And down at his feet struck him, with scurrie
scimitar.—

*So does the world, in passing, its poets blindly
slaughter;*

So do its poets, doubting, fall ever from their star.

SAID CHANG WU

Said Chang Wu, in his need,
“ Kings are of a godly breed,
Surely of a godly breed,
In China!

For the last of Kubla’s line,
Kubla with successors nine
To his throne of Kaan-Bali,
Is the idiot, Toghon Timur.

“ Him four hundred million bow to,
Humbly bow and kow-tow to,
As he sits, solemnly,
In exalted idiocy,
On his throne at Kaan-Bali;
As he sits and takes tribute,
Gold, jade and ruby stones,

Broken hearts and broken bones,
On a dais built to be
Tartar, eternally,
From Yenking to the Yellow Sea.

“Aye, most surely,” murmured Chang,
In his need,
“Kings are of a godly breed
In China!”

TO POETS WHO DESPOND

Sailing west, ever west,
Columbus suing his anxious quest
Saw dawns come and days go,
Dawns and days, how many and slow,
Nor ever a land sighted!

Then a dawn came, when on the air
He saw bird-wings around him, fair
And full of promise of a new world
Where his ship's wings could rest, furled,
And his dream's faith be righted!

And so, poets, even so
With us it is, long do we go
Sailing the seas of lone desire
Nor ever, ever seeming nigher
The land of a new vision!

Then sudden the wings of thought are stirred
Before us, like that promise-bird,
And soon we know we are near the shore
Of a song that never was sung before —
A song from lands elysian!

YOUNG APRIL

**April leaf-led; hills flower-spread;
And the little day-moon right up over head!**

**April bee-strewn; bird and brook tune;
And right up the blue the little day-moon!**

**April as far as the last hills are,
And every flower in her lap a star!**

**April a-swoon with the sky's clear boon,
And, for her soul, the little day-moon!**

OLD LOVE AND NEW

Last night shut in from wind and wet,
And seeking somehow to forget
How rain brings wanting or regret,
We toyed, half-wistful, with the planchette.

First there was nothing; then it said
That you had come back from the dead,
And that you knew how I had wed
Another — put her in your stead.

Reproach I looked for, then, from you;
And so, between old love and new,
I wondered which my heart would do,
Choose living rose or buried rue.

But no reproach — if you were there,
Touching my heart with the sweet air

Of strangeness I had thought so fair
In all our years of joy or care —

No word's reproach or jealousy
Slipped thro the table's spirity;
Tho where your arms were wont to be
Hers softly throbbing clung to me.

No! But all free of bitterness
You only said with the old stress,
"Do you remember Inverness
And the bluebells?" — no more nor less.

And yet too much! For all night long
Amid the wind's half-moan, half song,
I heard bluebells in a bent throng
Toll sadly! I have done you wrong!

More wrong, being untrue and slack,
Than I can know! For you may lack
Immortal love . . . The thought is rack.
Would that again I had you back!

VANQUISHED

Out upon you, mockingbird, how can I sing
That life's but a sorry thing, a stale thing, and
flat,
A bitterness, a barrenness, a dry and desert spring,
While your heart is rilling a note as pure as that!

Out upon you, optimist, wild philosopher,
So sweet in unreason, so irresistible,
That my darkest logic dissolves to but a blur,
And I swear that Nature of bliss alone is full.

A GAMBLER'S GUESS AT IT

**What are the stars but dice of God
Flung on the night's uncertain sod?**

**What is the stake He lays with Fate
But whether Life 's for love or hate?**

**What if He loses to the Foe?
Forfeit we — and He — must go.**

**What if He wins? Security
For all thro all eternity.**

THE CHIME-MASTER'S SONG

My heart is a bell, and joy beats in it,
A bell, moulded
By hands sublime,
And hung to sound, for one brief minute,
High on a beam
Of the towers of Time.

My heart is a bell, and Life can ring it,
When love bids,
Or at beauty's call;
With such wonder can sway and swing it
That its Maker
Is heard in all!

RESURGENCE

I was content, O Sea, to be free for a space from
striving,

Content as the brown weed is, at rest on rocks in the
sun,

When the salt tide is out, and the surf no more is
riving

At its roots, or swirling and bidding it sway where
the white waves run.

I was content — with life, and love, and a little
over;

A little achieved of the much that is given to men
to do.

But now with your tidal strife do you come again,
vain rover,

And tell of vastitudes to be sailed, or sounded, anew.

Now again do you surge. And the fathomless tides
of thinking.

Of wanting, waiting, despairing — or daring —
with you come.

The inner tides of the soul, that had ebbed with
slumberous shrinking,

But now are bursting again, thro the caves of it
long numb.

So vainly I lie on the cliff with the blissful Blue
above me

And listless sated gulls afloat below on the swells,
For I am soothless, sateless, because of desires that
shove me

Out and away with the winds, on quests no distance
quells!

THE GREATER PATIENCE

The passionless and imperceptible drifting
Of clouds that come where no wind seems to be,
That rise as if some need of earth were lifting
Them on, to bring her fields fertility,
Is like this moving thro the soul of me
Of thoughts that seem of some magnetic need
At the heart of life to come, and drop their dew,
And bring the fruitful words that men call true.

What is it you would tell me, O great skies?
That imperceptible is God's intent?
Coming as if its quest were never meant,
Yet bringing forth such fruit as never dies?
And do you therefore vow the impatient weave
But doubt; the patient only can believe?

AFTER THE SYMPHONY

The last finale had crashed,
A surging shower of iridescent vibrance.
And as the musicians sighed and rose
To drift away thro the night,
Their tired instruments, glinting no longer,
Catching no longer enchanted rhythms
Into their breasts of wood and brass,
Were laid away in case and cover,
Husht.

The violins slept;
With rhythm-dreams flitting along their fibres.
The flute with an aria
Lingering yet at its vents,
Like a disembodied soul at earthly haunts,
Lay still;

And still lay the clarionet and sad oboe
In the leathern dark that swathed them.

Then I heard speaking,
Started, I think, by a viola,
“ How much Beethoven has said in his Fifth!
Had he but told us a little more
The meaning of all life’s Minors
Would surely be open to us! ”

A piccolo sighed, “Perhaps.”

To which a cello mourned reply,
“ No; you forget Tchaikowsky!
Chords cannot plumb the ultimate meaning of
sorrow.

The ‘Pathetique’ is poof that grief and wrong
Are discord-atoms, element-powers,
That enter all being darkly.
Resolve them away, we may,
Ever into the Major,

But ever, as mist to moors, they return,
Blindly to brew their bane.
Meanings are but illusions that vanish,
Mysteries only abide! ”

“ Then,” said a blunt bass-viol,
“ Illusions are better, tho briefer!
Bach, with his clarity, for me!
The strong crisp creed of a fugue,
Free of all doubtings, aches, searchings,
Sure at last of completion! ”

“ And of immortality too? ” asked an oboe,
With reedy quaver.
“ Would indeed it were so! . . .
Would we could round life off
To a circle of perfection! ”

“ But since we cannot,” rang a horn,
“ For wishes are not wonders,
Why do we whine of meaning and mystery!

What do these matter! *Power* is all!
Strength to shout to the heavens
That we are masters of them
As long as we breathe of earth.
For Death and the Dead are equals — both are
dead!"

From the drums a volley echoed, " Both are dead! "

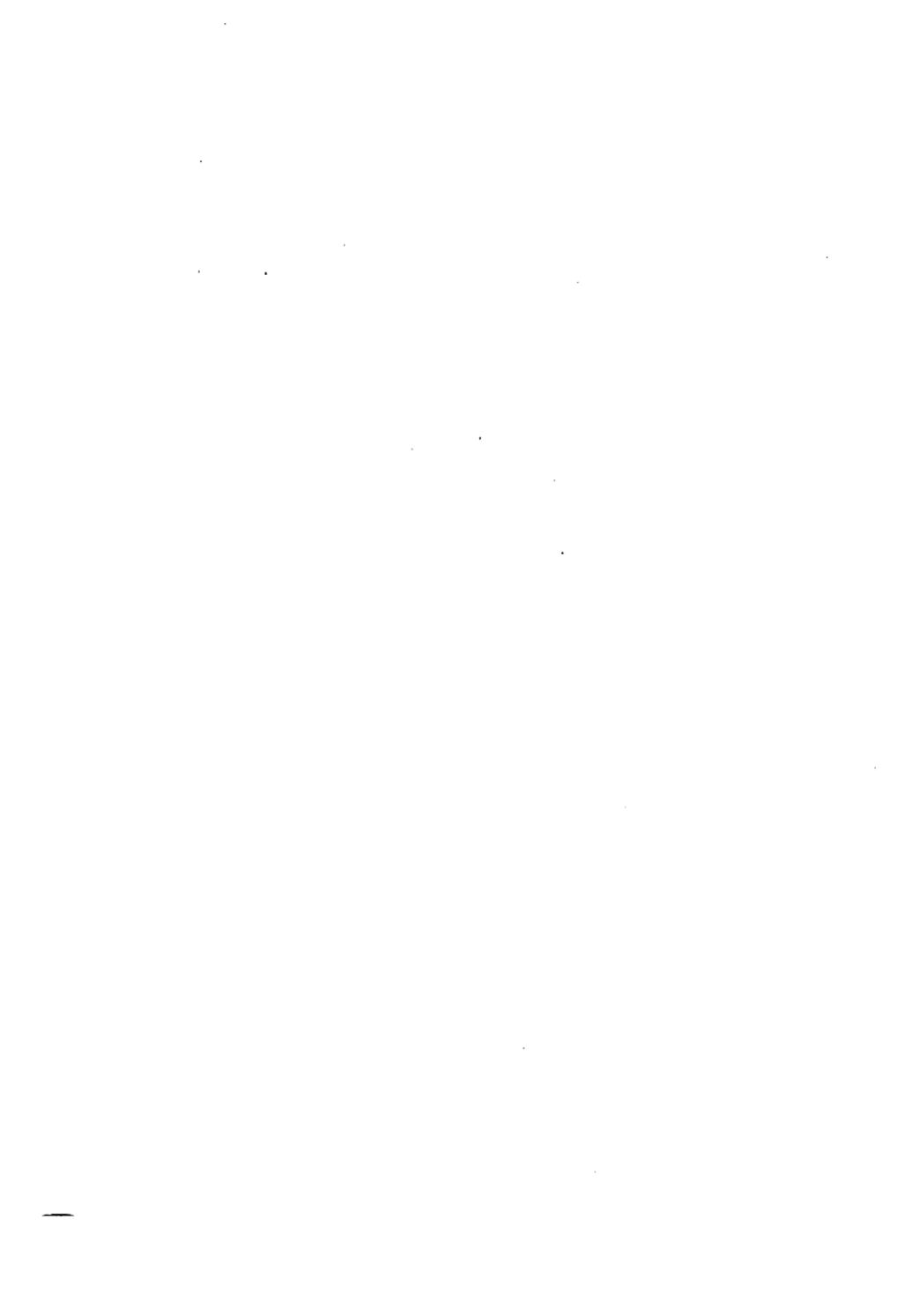
Whereon was hushing,
But not ceasing;
No more peace or ceasing
Than follows the rattle of clods on a coffin.
For all waited the word of their leader,
The violin, whose voice reverbs
The hope and despair of the world.

And softly it began, . . .
As if the thronging memories
Of a thousand symphonies stirred it:
Of allegros that ran like youth

Before slow-aging adagios;
Of scherzos, that dissolved in the arms
Of funeral strains, to be borne away
On the solemn hearse of silence:
Softly it began, . . .
“ We play but ill, comrades,
And blind to the Score’s beauty,
Else neither meaning nor mystery
Would overmuch trouble us!
Great joy can only come to the griever,
Great grief, to the rejoicer.
So only they who are resonant
With both, and who sound harmonies
That waken harmonics infinite,
Only they play well!
Be the clef what it may, then,
Be the time brave or broken,
There is a rhythm alwheres
Of mingled Major and Minor
For those with soul to seize it! ”

An interval followed
Of silverly murmured assent:
Not even the blare-begetting horn broke it.
Then slow sleep muted all to oblivion.

THE END



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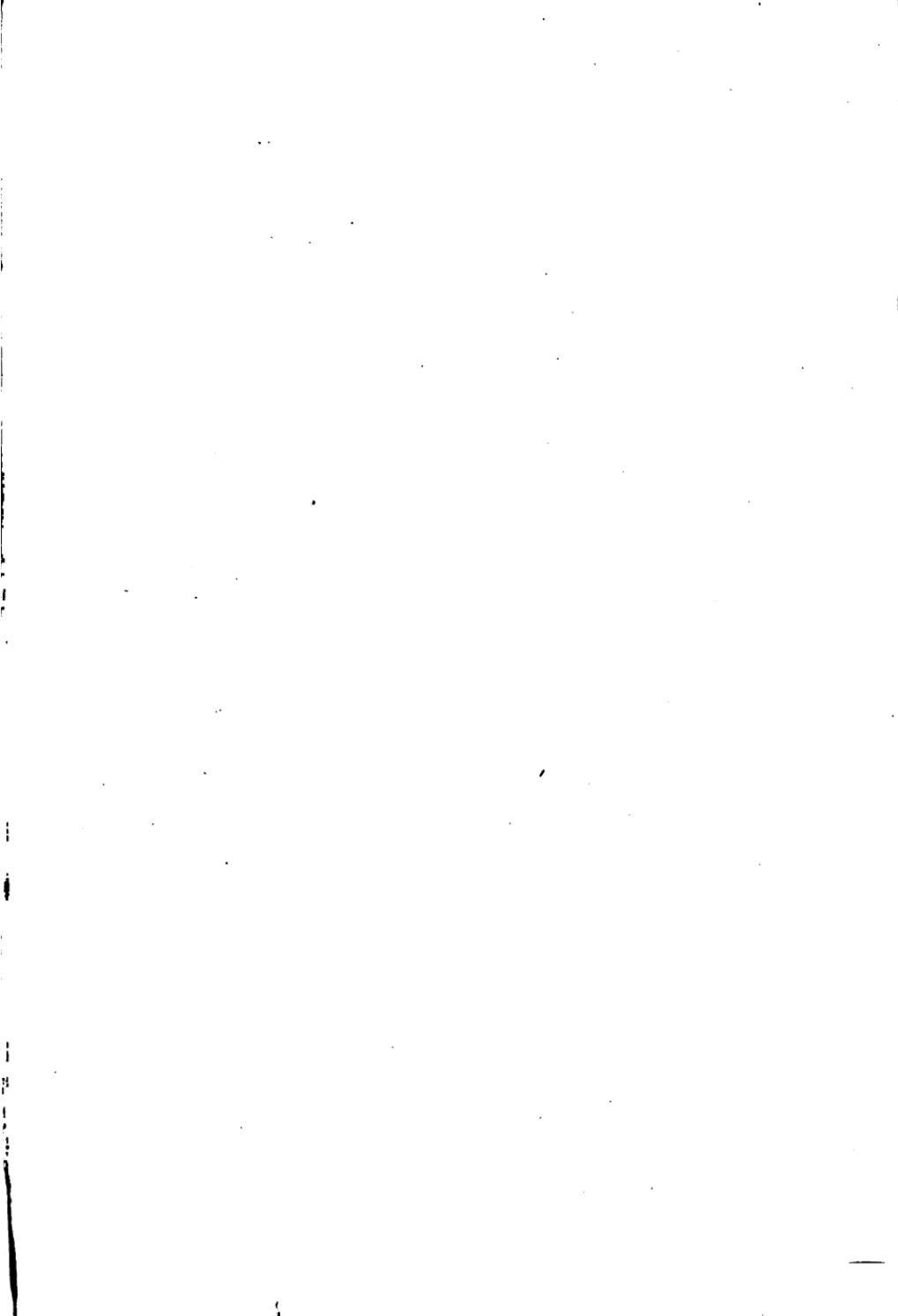
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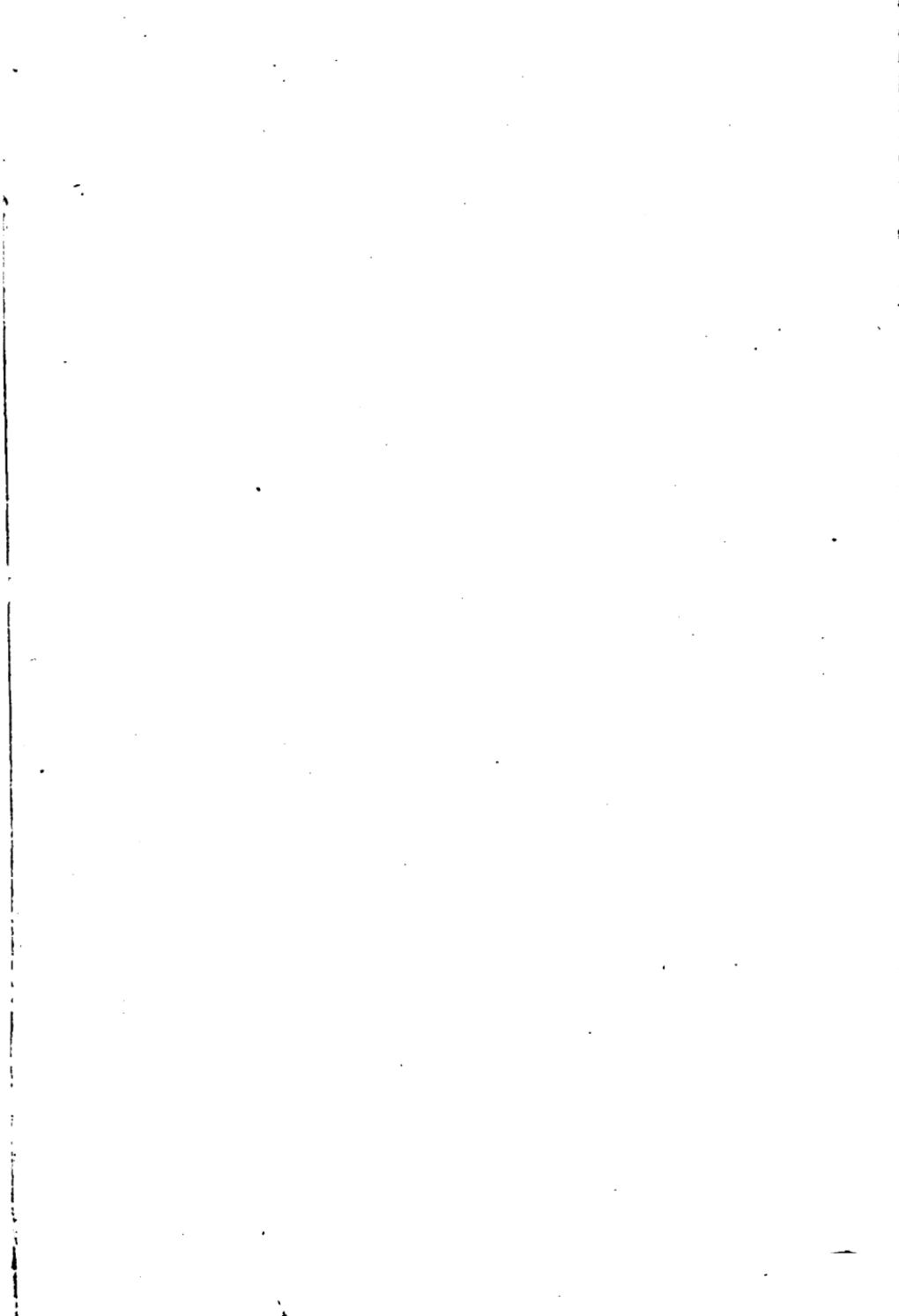
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